WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare

BY

VICTOR HUGO



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Translated

BY MELVILLE B. ANDERSON.

TO

ENGLAND

I Dedicate this Book

THE GLORIFICATION OF HER POET

I TELL ENGLAND THE TRUTH

BUT AS A LAND ILLUSTRIOUS AND FREE I ADMIRE HER

AND AS AN ASYLUM I LOVE HER

VICTOR HUGO

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE true title of this work should be, 'Concerning Shakespeare'. The Author's original incentive was the desire to 'introduce', as they say in England, the new translation of Shakespeare to the public. The tie that binds him so closely to the translator need not deprive him of the privilege of commending the translation[1]. From another side, however, and still more closely, his conscience was engaged by the subject itself. In contemplating Shakespeare, all the questions relating to art have arisen in the Author's mind. To deal with these questions is to set forth the mission of art; to deal with these questions is to set forth the duty of human thought toward man. Such an opportunity for speaking some true words imposes an obligation that is not to be shirked, especially in a time like ours. This the Author has understood. He has not hesitated to take every avenue of approach to these complex questions of art and of civilization, varying the horizon as the perspective shifted, and accepting every hint supplied by the urgency of the task. From such an enlarged conception of the subject this book has sprung.

[1] Made by the poet's son, François Victor Hugo. TR.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE work herewith presented to the public belongs to the literature of power rather than to the literature of knowledge. Beguiling his exile, remote from great libraries and from books of reference, by this sweeping review of all that he regarded as worthiest and noblest in the whole range of humane letters, Victor Hugo is sometimes pardonably inaccurate in details. The Translator has deemed it his duty to reproduce faithfully the text, and has taken the liberty to correct in footnotes (signed TR.) the errors that seemed to him most noticeable, especially those touching the life and works of Shakespeare. That he has corrected all which may appear important to others, he cannot venture to hope. Fortunately, this great work does not depend for its value upon the accuracy of its statements of fact, nor even, chiefly, upon the light it throws upon the life and genius of Shakespeare. It is mainly to be prized as a masterly statement of the Author's ideas concerning the proper relation of literature to human life,—a statement illuminated by wonderful flashes of poetry and eloquence, and illustrated by strong

characterizations of many famous books and men. This is not to say, however, that the present work will not serve, better than most others, as an introduction to Shakespeare, to Æschylus, and perhaps to some other of the immortals whom it so glowingly celebrates.

The Translator is responsible for the table of contents, and for the index, which makes no pretence of being exhaustive.

M. B. A.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

PART FIRST

BOOK I

SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

CHAPTER I

A DOZEN years ago, on an island near the coast of France, a house, at every season of forbidding aspect, was growing especially gloomy by reason of the approach of winter. The west wind, which had full sweep there, was piling thick upon this dwelling those enveloping fogs November interposes between sun and earth. In autumn, night falls early; the narrow windows made the days still briefer within, and deepened the sombre twilight of the house.

This house was flat-roofed, rectilinear, correct, square, and covered with a fresh coat of whitewash; it was Methodism in brick and stone. Nothing is so glacial as this English whiteness; it seems to offer you a kind of polar hospitality. One thinks with longing of the old peasant huts of France, wooden and black, yet cheerful with clustering vines.

Adjoining the house was a quarter-acre of sloping garden-ground, walled in, broken by granite steps and breast-walls,—a bare, treeless garden, with more stones than leaves. This little uncultivated patch abounded in tufts of marigolds, which bloom in autumn, and which the poor people of the country eat cooked with the conger-eel. The neighbouring sea-shore was concealed from this garden by a rise of ground, upon which there was a field of grass with some nettles and a big hemlock.

From the house was seen on the horizon at the right, in a little wood upon a hill, a tower said to be haunted; at the left was seen the dike. The dike was a row of

great piles set upright in the sand against a wall; these dry, gaunt, knotty logs resembled an array of leg-bones and knee-caps afflicted with anchylosis. Reverie, which likes to accept fancies as material for enigmas, might inquire to what race of men these three-fathom tibias had belonged.

The south front of the house faced the garden, the north front a deserted road. A corridor as an entry on the ground floor, a kitchen, a greenhouse, and a court-yard, then a little drawing-room looking out upon the lonely road, and a pretty large, dimly lighted study; on the second and third floors, neat, cold, freshly painted chambers, barely furnished, with white shrouds for window-hangings. Such was this dwelling, where the roar of the sea was always heard.

This house, a heavy, white, rectangular cube, chosen by its inmates upon a chance indication (possibly the indications of chance are not always without design), had the form of a tomb. Its inmates were a group—a family rather—of proscribed persons. The eldest was one of those men who at certain moments are found to be in the way in their country. He came from an assembly; the others, who were young, came from prison. To have written, furnishes a justification for bolts: whither should reflection lead, if not to the dungeon?

The prison had set them at large into banishment. The old man, the father, was accompanied by his whole family, except his eldest daughter, who could not follow him. His son-in-law was with her. Often were they leaning round a table, or seated on a bench, silent, grave, all of them secretly thinking of those two absent ones.

Why had these people installed themselves in a house so unattractive? By reason of haste, and from a desire to be as soon as possible anywhere but at the inn. Doubtless, also, because it was the first house to let that they had met with, and because exiles are not lucky.

This house—which it is time to rehabilitate a little and console; for who knows whether, in its loneliness, it is not sad at what we have just said about it? A house has a soul—this house was called Marine Terrace. The arrival was mournful; but, after all, we would not deny that the stay in it was agreeable, and Marine Terrace has left to those who then dwelt there none but affectionate and dear remembrances. And what we say of Marine Terrace, we say also of the Island of Jersey. Places of suffering and trial come to have a kind of bitter sweetness, which later on causes them to be regretted; they have a stern hospitality which appeals to the conscience.

There had been, before them, other exiles in that island. This is not the time to speak of them. We mention only that the most ancient of whom tradition, or perhaps a legend, has preserved the memory was a Roman, Vipsanius Minator, who employed his exile in extending, in the interest of his country's supremacy, the Roman wall of which you may still see some parts, like bits of hillock, near a bay named, I think, St Catherine's bay. This Vipsanius Minator was a consular dignitary, an old Roman so infatuated with Rome that he stood in the way of the Empire. Tiberius exiled him to this Cimmerian island, *Cæsarea*[1]; according to others, to one of the Orkneys. Tiberius did more; not content with exile, he decreed oblivion. It was forbidden to the orators of the Senate and the Forum to pronounce the name of Vipsanius Minator. The orators of the Forum and the Senate, and history, have obeyed,—a result regarding which Tiberius, for that matter, entertained no doubt. That arrogance in commanding, which proceeded so far as to give orders to men's thoughts, characterized certain ancient governments newly arrived at one of those firm situations where the greatest sum of crime produces the greatest sum of security.

[1] The ancient name of the Island of Jersey, the place of Hugo's exile. TR.

Let us return to Marine Terrace.

One morning, near the end of November, two of the inhabitants of the place, the father and the youngest of the sons, were seated in the lower parlour. They were silent, like shipwrecked persons who meditate.

Without, it rained, the wind blew, the house was as if deafened by the outer roaring. Both went on thinking, absorbed, perhaps, by thoughts of this coincidence between the beginning of winter and the beginning of exile.

Suddenly the son raised his voice and asked the father,

'What think you of this exile?'

'That it will be long.'

'How do you intend to employ it?'

The father answered, 'I shall gaze at the ocean.'

There was a silence. The father was the first to speak:

'And you?'

'I', said the son, 'I shall translate Shakespeare.'

CHAPTER II

THERE are, indeed, men whose souls are like the sea. Those billows, that ebb and flood, that inexorable going and coming, that noise of all the winds, that blackness and that translucency, that vegetation peculiar to the deep, that democracy of clouds in full hurricane, those eagles flecked with foam, those wonderful star-risings reflected in mysterious agitation by millions of luminous wave-tops,—confused heads of the multitudinous sea,—the errant lightnings which seem to watch, those prodigious sobbings, those half-seen monsters, those nights of darkness broken by howlings, those furies, those frenzies, those torments, those rocks, those shipwrecks, those fleets crushing each other, mingling their human thunders with the divine thunders and staining the sea with blood; then that charm, that mildness, those festivals, those gay white sails, those fishing-boats, those songs amid

the uproar, those shining ports, those mists rising from the shore, those cities at the horizon's edge, that deep blue of sky and water, that useful asperity, that bitter savour which keeps the world wholesome, that harsh salt without which all would putrefy; those wraths and those appeasements, that all in one, the unforeseen amid the changeless, the vast marvel of inexhaustibly varied monotony, that smoothness after an upheaval, those hells and those heavens of the unfathomed, infinite, over-moving deep,—all this may exist in a mind, and then that mind is called genius, and you have Æschylus, you have Isaiah, you have Juvenal, you have Dante, you have Michael Angelo, you have Shakespeare; and it is all one whether you look at these souls or at the sea [1].

CHAPTER III

1. William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon, in a house under the tiles of which was concealed a confession of the Catholic faith beginning with these words, 'I, John Shakespeare'. John was the father of William. The house, situated in Henley Street, was humble; the chamber in which Shakespeare came into the world, wretched: the walls were whitewashed, the black rafters laid crosswise; at the farther end was a tolerably large window with two small panes, where you may read to-day, among other names, that of Walter Scott. This poor dwelling sheltered a decayed family. The father of William Shakespeare had been an alderman; his grandfather had been bailiff. Shakespeare signifies 'shake-spear'; the family had for a coat-of-arms an arm holding a spear,—allusive arms, confirmed, they say, by Queen Elizabeth in 1595, and visible, at the time we write, on Shake-

[1] The reader is invited to compare this passage with the eloquent interpretation of it at the beginning of Swinburne's *Study of Shakespeare*. Tr.

speare's tomb in the church of Stratford-on-Avon.[1] There is little agreement about the orthography of the word Shake-spear as a family name; it is written variously,—Shakspere, Shakespere, Shakespeare, Shakspeare: in the eighteenth century it was habitually written Shakespear. The present translator[2] has adopted the spelling Shakespeare as the only true one, and gives for it unanswerable reasons. The only objection[3] that can be made is that Shakspeare is more easily pronounced than Shakespeare; that cutting off the *e* mute is perhaps useful; and that in the interest of the names themselves and to facilitate their wider currency, posterity has, as regards proper names, a certain euphonic right. It is evident, for example, that in French poetry the orthography *Shakspeare* is necessary; however, convinced by the translator, we write, in prose, *Shakespeare*.

2. The Shakespeare family had some original drawback, probably its Catholicism, which caused its downfall. A little after the birth of William, Alderman Shakespeare was no more than 'butcher John'.

[1] An application for a grant of coat-armour to his father was made in 1596, and another in 1599; but the matter seems to have gone no further than the drafting of designs by the heralds. The poet's relatives, however, at a later date assumed his right to the coat suggested for his father in 1596. The obvious pun upon the name was not overlooked either by eulogists or by defamers. For example, an ancient epigram reads,

> 'Thou hast so used thy Pen (or shook thy Speare)
> That Poets startle, nor thy wit come neare.' TR.

[2] That is, the translator of Shakespeare's works.

[3] This 'objection' is of course such to a Frenchman only. Indeed this whole orthographical excursus, unintelligible as it must be to the English reader, is retained only upon the general principle of fidelity. The translator referred to is François Victor Hugo (see Preface). It may be added that out of the scores of different spellings of the name, the New Shakspere Society has adopted the orthography *Shakespere*, upon the ground that it was so spelled by a very eminent authority,—the bearer of the name himself. TR.

William Shakespeare made his *début* in a slaughter-house. At the age of fifteen he entered his father's shambles, bared his arm, and killed sheep and calves, 'in a high style', says Aubrey. At eighteen he married. Between the days of the slaughter-house and the marriage he composed a quatrain. This quatrain, directed against the neighbouring villages, is his maiden effort in poetry. He there says that Hillborough is illustrious for its ghosts, and Bidford for its drunkards. He made this quatrain (being tipsy himself) in the open air, under an apple-tree still celebrated in the country in consequence of this midsummer-night's dream. In this night and in this dream, where there were lads and lasses, in this drunken fit and under this apple-tree, he discovered that Anne Hathaway was a pretty girl[1]. The wedding followed. He espoused this Anne Hathaway, older than himself by eight years, had a daughter by her, then twins, boy and girl, and left her; and this wife disappears from Shakespeare's life, to reappear only in his will, where he leaves her his *second-best bed*, 'having probably', says a biographer, 'employed the best one with others.' Shakespeare, like La Fontaine, did but sip at married life. His wife being put aside, he was a schoolmaster, then clerk to an attorney, then a poacher. This poaching was made use of later to justify the statement that Shakespeare had been a thief. One day he was caught poaching in Sir Thomas Lucy's park. They threw him into prison; they began proceedings. These being spitefully followed up, he saved himself by flight to London.

[1] For the story, which Victor Hugo has, after his fashion, very much improved upon, see Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare* 3d ed., pp. 205–6, and the accompanying 'illustrative notes', pp. 354–9. The quatrain referred to runs as follows:

'Piping Pebworth, Dancing Marston,
Haunted Hillborough, Hungry Grafton,
Dadgeing Exhall, Papist Wicksford,
Beggarly Broom, and Drunken Bidford.' Tr.

In order to gain a livelihood, he began by holding horses at the doors of theatres. Plautus had turned a millstone. This business of holding horses at the doors still existed at London in the last century, and it brought together a kind of small band or corps that they called 'Shakespeare's boys'.

3. You may call London the black Babylon—gloomy by day, magnificent by night. To see London is a sensation; it is uproar under smoke—mysterious analogy: uproar is the smoke of noise. Paris is the capital of one side of humanity; London is the capital of the opposite side. Splendid and melancholy town! There activity is tumult, and the people swarm like ants. One is free there, and yet confined. London is an orderly chaos. The London of the sixteenth century did not resemble the London of our day; but it was already an immense town. Cheapside was the main street; St. Paul's, now a dome, was then a spire. The plague was nearly as much at home in London as in Constantinople. There was not, in fact, much difference between Henry VIII and a sultan. Fires (as in Constantinople, again) were frequent in London, on account of the populous parts of the town being built entirely of wood. In the streets there was but one carriage,—the carriage of her Majesty; not a cross-road where they did not cudgel some pickpocket with the flail [1], which is still retained at Groningen for thrashing wheat. Manners were rough, almost savage; a fine lady rose at six, and went to bed at nine. Lady Geraldine Kildare, to whom Lord Surrey inscribed verses, breakfasted off a pound of bacon and a pot of beer. Queens—the wives of Henry VIII—knitted mittens, and did not even object to their being of coarse red wool. In this London the Duchess of Suffolk took care of her hen-house, and, with her dress tucked up to her knees, threw corn to the ducks in the court below. To dine

[1] A purely conjectural translation, Victor Hugo's word being 'drotschbloch.' TR.

at midday was to dine late. It was the delight of the upper classes to go and play at 'hot cockles' at my Lord Leicester's. Anne Boleyn played there; she knelt down, with eyes bandaged, for this game, without knowing that she was rehearsing for a play of a different kind upon the scaffold. This same Anne Boleyn, destined for the throne, whence she was to go still farther, was perfectly dazzled when her mother brought her three linen chemises, at sixpence the ell, and promised her, for the Duke of Norfolk's ball, a pair of new shoes worth five shillings.

4. Under Elizabeth, in spite of the wrath of the Puritians there were in London eight companies of actors,—those of Newington Butts, Earl Pembroke's company, Lord Strange's retainers, the Lord Chamberlain's troop, the Lord High Admiral's troop, the company of Blackfriars, the children of St. Paul's, and, in the first rank, the Bear-baiters. Lord Southampton went to the play every evening. Nearly all the theatres were situated on the banks of the Thames,—a fact which increased the number of watermen. The playrooms were of two kinds: some merely open tavern-yards, a platform set up against a wall, no ceiling, rows of benches placed on the ground, for boxes the windows of the tavern. The performance took place in the broad daylight and in the open air. The principal of these theatres was the Globe. The others, which were mostly closed playrooms, lighted with lamps, were used at night, the most frequented being Blackfriars. The best actor of Lord Pembroke's troop was named Henslowe; the best actor at Blackfriars was Burbage. The Globe was situated on the bank-side. This is known by a document at Stationers' Hall, dated the 26th of November, 1607: 'His Majesty's servants playing usually at the Globe, on the Bank Side.' The scenery was simple. Two swords laid crosswise—sometimes two laths—signified a battle. A shirt over the coat signified a knight; a broom-handle draped with the

petticoat of the players' hostess signified a palfrey caparisoned. A rich theatre, which made its inventory in 1598, possessed 'the limbs of Moors, a dragon, a big horse with his legs, a cage, a rock, four Turks' heads and that of old Mahomet, a wheel for the siege of London, and a hell's mouth.' Another had 'a sun, a target, the three plumes of the Prince of Wales, with the device *Ich Dien*, besides six devils, and the Pope on his mule.' An actor besmeared with plaster and motionless, signified a wall; if he spread his fingers, it meant that the wall had crevices. A man laden with a faggot, followed by a dog, and carrying a lantern, meant the moon; his lantern represented the moonshine. People have laughed at this *mise en scène* of moonlight, made famous by the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, without imagining that there is in it a gloomy suggestion from Dante. (See *The Inferno*, canto XX.) The dressing-room of these theatres, where the actors robed themselves pell-mell, was a corner separated from the stage by a rag of some kind stretched on a cord. The dressing-room at Blackfriars was shut off by an ancient piece of tapestry which had belonged to one of the guilds, and represented an ironmonger's shop. Through the holes in this curtain, hanging in tatters, the public saw the actors rouge their cheeks with brick-dust, or make up their moustaches with a cork burned at a candle-end. From time to time, through an occasional opening of the curtain, you might see a face begrimed as a Moor, peeping to see if the time for going on the stage had arrived, or the glabrous chin of an actor who was to play the part of a woman. 'Glabri histriones' said Plautus. These theatres were frequented by noblemen, scholars, soldiers, and sailors. There was acted Lord Buckhurst's tragedy, entitled *Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex*; Lyly's *Mother Bombie*, in which the *cheep-cheep* of sparrows was heard; *The Libertine*, an imitation of the *Convivado de Piedra*, which was making the tour of Europe; *Felix and*

Philomena, a fashionable comedy performed for the first time at Greenwich before 'Queen Bess'; *Promos and Cassandra*, a comedy dedicated by the author, George Whetstone, to William Fleetwood, recorder of London; *Tamerlane* and the *Jew of Malta*, by Christopher Marlowe; farces and pieces by Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, and Thomas Kyd; and lastly, mediæval comedies. For just as France has her *l'Avocat Pathelin*, so England has her *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. While the actors gesticulated and ranted, the noblemen and officers—with their plumes and bands of gold lace, standing or squatting on the stage, turning their backs, haughty and at their ease in the midst of the constrained actors—laughed, shouted, played at cards, threw them at each other's heads, or played at 'post and pair'; and below, in the darkness, on the pavement, among pots of beer and pipes, the 'stinkards', or groundlings, were dimly visible. It was by way of that very theatre that Shakespeare entered upon the dramatic career. From being a tender of horses, he became a shepherd of men.

5. Such was the theatre in London about the year 1580, under 'the great Queen'. It was not much less wretched, a century later, at Paris, under 'the great King'; and Molière, at his *début*, had, like Shakespeare, to make shift with rather miserable playhouses. There is in the archives of the 'Comédie Française' an unpublished manuscript of four hundred pages, bound in parchment and tied with a band of white leather. It is the diary of Lagrange, a comrade of Molière. Lagrange thus describes the theatre where Molière's company played by order of Mr. Rataban, superintendent of the King's buildings: 'Three rafters, the frames rotten and shored up, and half the room roofless and in ruin'. In another place, under date of Sunday, the 15th of March, 1671, he says: 'The company have resolved to make a large ceiling over the whole hall, which, up to the said date

(15th) has not been covered, save by a large blue cloth suspended by cords'. As for the lighting and heating of this hall, particularly on the occasion when such extraordinary sums were spent upon the performance of *Psyche*, which was by Molière and Corneille, we read: 'Candles, thirty francs; janitor for wood, three francs'. This was the style of playhouse which 'the great King' placed at the disposal of Molière. These bounties to literature did not impoverish Louis XIV so much as to deprive him of the pleasure of giving, at one time, two hundred thousand livres to Lavardin, and the same to D'Epernon; two hundred thousand livres, besides the regiment of France, to the Count de Médavid; four hundred thousand livres to the Bishop of Noyon, because this Bishop was a Clermont-Tonnerre, a family that had two patents of Count and Peer of France, one for Clermont and one for Tonnerre; five hundred thousand livres to the Duke of Vivonne, seven hundred thousand livres to the Duke of Quintin-Lorges, and eight hundred thousand livres to Monseigneur Clement of Bavaria, Prince-Bishop of Liége. Let us add that he gave a thousand livres pension to Molière. We find in Lagrange's journal, in the month of April, 1663, this remark: 'About the same time M. de Molière received, as a great wit, a pension from the King, and has been placed on the civil list for the sum of a thousand livres'. Later, when Molière was dead, and interred at St. Joseph, 'chapel of ease to the parish of St. Eustache', the King pushed his patronage so far as to permit his tomb to be 'raised a foot out of the ground'.

6. Shakespeare, as we see, remained a long time on the threshold of theatrical life,—outside, rather, and in the street At length he entered. He passed the door and got behind the scenes. He succeeded in becoming call-boy, vulgarly, a 'barker'. About 1586 Shakespeare was 'barking' with Greene at Blackfriars. In 1587 he gained a step. In the piece called *The Giant Agrapardo, King of Nubia, worse*

than his late brother, Angulafer, Shakespeare was intrusted with the task of carrying the turban to the giant. Then from supernumerary he became actor,—thanks to Burbage, to whom, long after, by an interlineation in his will, he left thirty-six shillings to buy a gold ring. He was the friend of Condell and Hemynge,—his comrades while alive, his publishers after his death. He was handsome: he had a high forehead, his beard was brown, his manner was gentle, his mouth pleasant, his eye profound. He took delight in reading Montaigne, translated by Florio. He frequented the Apollo Tavern, where he would see and keep company with two frequenters of his theatre,—Decker, author of *The Gull's Horn book*, in which a chapter is specially devoted to 'the way a man of fashion ought to behave at the play', and Dr Simon Forman, who has left a manuscript journal containing reports of the first performance of *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Winter's Tale*[1]. He used to meet Sir Walter Raleigh at the Mermaid Club. Somewhere about that time Mathurin Régnier met Philippe de Béthune at *La Pomme de Pin*. The great lords and fine gentlemen of the day were rather prone to lend their names in order to start new taverns. At Paris the Vicomte de Montauban, who was a Créqui, had founded *Le tripot des onze mille Diables*. At Madrid the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the unfortunate admiral of the Invincible Armada, had founded the *Puño-en-rostro*, and in London Sir Walter Raleigh had founded the Mermaid. There drunkenness and wit kept company.

7. In 1589, while James VI of Scotland, looking to the throne of England, was paying his respects to Elizabeth, who, two years before, on the 8th of February, 1587, had beheaded Mary Stuart, mother of

[1] Inexact; nothing is known of the first representation of *The Merchant of Venice*. Dr Forman records representations of but three plays, *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale*; and it does not appear that these were first representations. Tr.

this James, Shakespeare composed his first drama, *Pericles* [1608][1]. In 1591, while the Catholic King was dreaming, after a scheme of the Marquis d'Astorga, of a second Armada, more lucky than the first, inasmuch as it was never launched, he composed *Henry VI.* In 1593, when the Jesuits obtained from the Pope express permission to paint 'the pains and torments of hell' on the walls of 'the chamber of meditation' of Clermont College, where they often shut up a poor youth who, the year after, became famous under the name of Jean Châtel, he composed *The Taming of the Shrew* [1594-97 ?]. In 1594, when, looking daggers at each other, and ready for battle, the King of Spain, the Queen of England, and even the King of France, all three were saying 'my good city of Paris', he continued and completed *Henry VI* [1591-92]. In 1595, while Clement VIII at Rome was solemnly striking Henry IV with his crosier over the backs of Cardinals du Perron and d'Ossat, he wrote *Timon of Athens* [1607-8]. In 1596, the year when Elizabeth published an edict against the long points of bucklers, and when Philip II drove from his presence a woman who had laughed while blowing her nose, he composed *Macbeth* [1606]. In 1597, when this same Philip II said to the Duke of Alva 'You deserve the axe', not because the Duke of Alva had put the Low Countries to fire and sword, but because he had entered the King's presence without being announced[2], he composed *Cymbeline* [1609] and

[1] As the chronology of the plays here given is very different from that accepted at present, the translator has inserted in brackets, after the name of each play, the dates found in Dowden's *Shakspere Primer*. To that excellent little book the uninitiated reader is referred for a general correction of Hugo's biography of Shakespeare, which is to some extent legendary or fabulous. Tr.

[2] The Duke of Alva who put the Netherlands to fire and sword died in 1582. His memory may therefore be relieved of the stain of having entered the King's presence unannounced in 1597. Tr.

Richard III [1593]. In 1598, when the Earl of Essex ravaged Ireland, wearing on his hat the glove of the Virgin Queen Elizabeth, he composed *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* [1592-93], *King John* [1595], *Love's Labour Lost* [1590], *The Comedy of Errors* [1591], *All's Well that Ends Well* [1601-2], *A Midsummer Night's Dream* [1593-94], and *The Merchant of Venice* [1596]. In 1599, when the Privy Council, at her Majesty's request, deliberated on the proposal to put Dr Hayward to the rack for having stolen some of the ideas of Tacitus, he composed *Romeo and Juliet* [two dates: 1591, 1596-97 ?]. In 1600, while the Emperor Rudolph was waging war against his rebel brother, and sentencing his son, murderer of a woman, to be bled to death, he composed *As You Like It* [1599], *Henry IV* [1597-98], *Henry V* [1599], and *Much Ado About Nothing* [1598]. In 1601, when Bacon published the eulogy on the execution of the Earl of Essex [1], just as Leibnitz, eighty years afterwards, was to find out good reasons for the murder of Monaldeschi (with this difference, however, that Monaldeschi was nothing to Leibnitz, and that Essex had been the benefactor of Bacon), he composed *Twelfth Night; or, What you Will* [1600-1]. In 1602, while, in obedience to the Pope, the King of France, styled by Cardinal-nephew Aldobrandini 'The Fox of Béarn', was counting his beads every day, reciting the litanies on Wednesday, and the rosary of the Virgin Mary on Saturday; while fifteen cardinals, assisted by the heads of the Orders, were opening the discussion on Molinism at Rome; and while the Holy See, at the request of the Crown of Spain, was 'saving Christianity and the world' by the institution of the congregation *de Auxiliis*,—he composed *Othello* [1604].

[1] The author here confuses two works,—the *Declaration of the Practices and Treasons of Essex* (1601), in which Bacon's part was little more than that of amanuensis to the Government, and his *Apology in Certain Imputations concerning the Late Earl of Essex* (1604). TR.

In 1603, when the death of Elizabeth made Henry IV say 'she was a virgin just as I am a Catholic', he composed *Hamlet* [1602]. In 1604, while Philip III was losing his last footing in the Low Countries, he wrote *Julius Cæsar* [1601] and *Measure for Measure* [1603]. In 1604, at the time when James I of England, the former James VI of Scotland, wrote against Bellarmin the *Tortura Torti*, and, faithless to Carr, began to smile upon Villiers, who was afterwards to honour him with the title of 'Your Piggishness', he composed *Coriolanus* [1608]. In 1607, when the University of York received the little Prince of Wales as doctor, according to the account of Father St. Romuald, 'with all the ceremonies and the usual fur gowns', he wrote *King Lear* [1605-6]. In 1609, while the magistracy of France, placing the scaffold at the disposition of the King, gave upon trust a *carte blanche* for the sentence of the Prince of Condé 'to such punishment as it might please his Majesty to order', Shakespeare composed *Troilus and Cressida* [1603 ? revised 1607 ?]. In 1610, when Ravaillac assassinated Henry IV by the dagger, and the French Parliament assassinated Ravaillac by the process of quartering his body, Shakespeare composed *Antony and Cleopatra* [1607]. In 1611, while the Moors, driven out by Philip III, were crawling out of Spain in the pangs of death, he wrote *The Winter's Tale* [1610-11], *Henry VIII* [1612-13], and *The Tempest* [1610].

8. He used to write on loose scraps of paper,—like nearly all poets, for that matter. Malherbe and Boileau are almost the only ones who have written on sheets folded and stitched. Racan said to Mlle de Gournay, 'I have this morning seen M. de Malherbe sewing with coarse grey thread a fascicle of white paper, on which will soon appear some sonnets.' Each of Shakespeare's dramas, composed according to the wants of his company, was in all probability learned and rehearsed in haste by the actors from the original itself, as they had not time to copy it;

hence in his case, as in Molière's, the dismemberment and loss of manuscripts. There were few or no entry books in those almost itinerant theatres; no coincidence in time between representation and publication of the plays; sometimes not even a printed copy, the stage remaining the sole medium of publication. When the pieces by chance are printed, they bear titles which bewilder us. The second part of *Henry VI* is entitled *The First Part of the Contention between York and Lancaster*. The third part is called *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York* [1]. All this enables us to understand why so much obscurity rests on the dates when Shakespeare composed his dramas, and why it is difficult to fix them with precision. The dates which we have just given—here brought together for the first time—are pretty nearly certain; notwithstanding some doubt still exists as to the years when were written, or even played, *Timon of Athens*, *Cymbeline*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, and *Macbeth*. Here and there we meet with barren years; others there are of which the fertility seems excessive. It is, for instance, on a simple note by Meres, the author of *The Wit's Treasury*, that we are compelled to attribute to the year 1598 the creation of six pieces,—*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *King John*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *All's Well that Ends Well*, which Meres calls *Love's Labour's Won* [2]. The date of *Henry VI* is fixed, for the First Part at least, by an allusion which Nash makes to this play in *Pierce Penniless*. The year 1604 is given as that of *Measure for Measure*, inasmuch as this piece was played on St Stephen's

[1] The plays thus entitled are older ones, of which *Henry VI*, Parts II and III, are recasts. Tr.

[2] Francis Meres published in 1598 his *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury*, in which he enumerates not six but *twelve* of Shakespeare's plays. This mention of course merely proves the existence of the plays in 1598; he does not state that any of them were produced that year. Tr.

Day of that year,—a circumstance of which Hemynge makes a special note; and the year 1611 for *Henry VIII*, inasmuch as *Henry VIII* was played at the time of the burning of the Globe Theatre [1]. Various circumstances—a disagreement with his company, a whim of the Lord Chamberlain—sometimes compelled Shakespeare to change from one theatre to another. *The Taming of the Shrew* was played for the first time in 1593, at Henslowe's theatre [2]; *Twelfth Night* in 1601, at Middle Temple Hall; *Othello* in 1602, at Hareficld Castle [3]. *King Lear* was played at Whitehall during Christmas (1607) before James I [4]. Burbage created the part of Lear. Lord Southampton, recently set free from the Tower of London, was present at this performance. This Lord Southampton was an old frequenter of Blackfriars, and Shakespeare, in 1589 [5], had dedicated the poem of *Venus and Adonis* to him. Adonis was the fashion at that time; twenty-five years after Shakespeare, the Chevalier Marini wrote a poem on Adonis which he dedicated to Louis XIII.

9. In 1597 Shakespeare lost his son, of whom the only trace on earth is one line in the death-register of the parish of Stratford-on-Avon: '1597. *August* 17. *Hamnet. Filius William Shakespeare.*' On the 6th of September, 1601, the poet's father, John Shakespeare, died. He was now the head of his company of actors. James I had given him in 1607 the management of Blackfriars, and afterward the privilege of the Globe. In 1613 the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James, and the Elector Palatine, King of Bohemia, whose statue may be seen in the ivy at the angle of

[1] This 'most celebrated theatre the world has ever seen' was destroyed by fire on Tuesday, June 29, 1613. TR.

[2] This must have been the older play, *The Taming of a Shrew*, published in 1594. TR.

[3] Halliwell-Phillips (*Outlines*, p. 180) says that *Othello* is first heard of in 1604. TR.

[4] The true date is Dec. 26, 1606. TR.

[5] *Venus and Adonis* was published in 1593. TR.

a great tower at Heidelberg, came to the Globe to see *The Tempest* performed. These royal attendances did not save him from the censure of the Lord Chamberlain. A certain interdict weighed upon his pieces, the representation of which was tolerated, and the printing now and then forbidden. In the second volume of the register at Stationers' Hall you may read to-day, on the margin of the title of three pieces, *As You Like It*, *Henry V*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, the words '4 *Augt. to be staied.*' The motives for these interdictions escape us. Shakespeare was able, for instance, without arousing protest, to place upon the stage his former poaching adventure, and make of Sir Thomas Lucy a witling (Justice Shallow); to show the public Falstaff killing the buck and belabouring Shallow's people; and to push the likeness so far as to give to Shallow the arms of Sir Thomas Lucy,—an Aristophanic piece of audacity by a man who did not know Aristophanes. Falstaff, in Shakespeare's manuscripts, was written 'Falstaffe.' In the meantime he had amassed some wealth, as did Molière later. Towards the end of the century he was rich enough for a certain Richard Quiney to ask, on the 8th of October [1], 1598, his assistance in a letter which bears the superscription, 'To my loveing good ffrend and countreyman Mr. Wm. Shackespere delr theese.' He refused the assistance, as it appears, and returned the letter, which was found afterwards among Fletcher's papers, and on the back of which this same Richard Quiney had written *Histrio* ! *Mima* [2] ! Shakespeare loved Stratford-on-Avon, where he was born, where his father had died, where his son was buried.

[1] The author has the date wrong. It should be the 25th of October. The letter is signed '*Ryc. Quyne*', which Hugo prints thus: '*Ryc-Quiney.*' TR.

[2] Halliwell-Phillipps, who gives at p. 144 of the *Outlines* a fac-simile of this, the only letter directly addressed to Shakespeare known to exist, is silent about this part of the anecdote. The letter was found in the Corporation archives at Stratford. TR.

He there bought or built a house, which he christened 'New Place'. We say, 'bought or built a house'; for he bought it according to Whiterill, and he built it according to Forbes, and on this point Forbes disputes with Whiterill[1]. These cavils of the learned about trifles are not worth being searched into, particularly when we see Father Hardouin, for instance, completely upset a whole passage of Pliny by replacing *nos pridem* by *non pridem*.

10. Shakespeare went from time to time to pass some days at New Place. Half-way upon the short journey he encountered Oxford, and at Oxford the Crown Inn, and at the inn the hostess, a beautiful, intelligent creature, wife of the worthy innkeeper, Davenant. In 1606 Mrs. Davenant was brought to bed of a son, whom they named William; and in 1644 Sir William Davenant, created knight by Charles I, wrote to Rochester: 'Know this, which does honour to my mother,—I am the son of Shakespeare'; thus allying himself to Shakespeare in the same way that in our days M. Lucas-Montigny has claimed relationship with Mirabeau. Shakespeare had married his two daughters,—Susanna to a doctor, Judith to a merchant. Susanna was clever, but Judith knew not how to read or write, and signed her name with a cross. In 1613 it happened that Shakespeare, having come to Stratford-on-Avon, had no further desire to return to London. Perhaps he was in difficulties. He had just been compelled to mortgage his house. The contract deed of this mortgage, dated the 11th of March, 1613, and indorsed with Shakespeare's signature, was in the last century in the hands of an attorney, who gave it to Garrick, who lost it. Garrick lost likewise (it is Mlle Violetti, his wife, who tells the

[1] Shakespeare bought the Great House, or New Place, in the spring of 1597. For interesting particulars, see Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines*, pp. 116 ff., and R. G. White's *Life and Genius of Shakespeare*, p. 121. An exhaustive account of it is given in the appendix to the *Outlines*, pp. 447–79. Tr.

story) Forbes's manuscript, with his letters in Latin. From 1613 Shakespeare remained at his house at New Place, occupied with his garden, forgetting his plays, wholly devoted to his flowers. He planted in this garden of New Place the first mulberry-tree that was grown at Stratford,—just as Queen Elizabeth wore, in 1561, the first silk stockings seen in England. On the 25th of March, 1616, feeling ill, he made his will. His will, dictated by him, is written on three pages; he signed each of them with a trembling hand. On the first page he signed only his Christian name, 'William'; on the second, 'Willm. Shaspr'; on the third, 'William Shasp'[1]. On the 23d of April he died. He had that day reached the exact age of fifty-two years, having been born on the 23d of April, 1564. On that same day, 23d April, 1616, died Cervantes, a genius of like stature. When Shakespeare died, Milton was eight years, and Corneille ten years of age; Charles I and Cromwell were two youths, the one of sixteen, the other of seventeen years.

CHAPTER IV

SHAKESPEARE'S life was greatly embittered. He lived perpetually slighted. Posterity may read this to-day in his familiar verses:

> Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
> And almost thence my nature is subdu'd
> To what it works in, like the dyer's hand:
> Pity me then. . . .
> Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink
> Potions of eysel. *Sonnet* 111.

[1] This statement of the form of the poet's signatures to his will is incorrect. The surname is signed in full in each case. All Shakespeare's authentic signatures are conveniently exhibited in fac-simile at the end of Charles Knight's *Biograghy of Shakspere*. In at least five of the six signatures the spelling is apparently *Shakspere*: in the other (the last upon the will) it is obscure. The common spelling, *Shakespeare*, is based upon 'the mode in which it was usually printed during the poet's life.' TR.

Your love and pity doth th' impression fill
Which vulgar scandal stamp'd upon my brow.
Sonnet 112.

Nor thou with public kindness honour me,
Unless thou take that honour from thy name.
Sonnet 36.

Or on my frailties why are frailer spies.
Sonnet 121.

Shakespeare had permanently near him one envious person, Ben Jonson, an indifferent comic poet, whose first steps he had aided [1]. Shakespeare was thirty-nine when Elizabeth died. This Queen had not paid much attention to him; she managed to reign forty-four years without recognizing Shakespeare. None the less is she historically styled 'protectress of arts and letters', etc. The historians of the old school gave these certificates to all princes, whether they knew how to read or not.

Shakespeare, persecuted as, at a later date, was Molière, sought, like Molière, to lean on the master. Shakespeare and Molière would in our days have had a loftier spirit. The master was Elizabeth, 'King Elizabeth', as the English say. Shakespeare glorified Elizabeth: he called her 'the Virgin Star', 'Star of the West', and 'Diana',—a name divine which pleased the Queen; but in vain. The Queen took no notice of it,—less sensitive to the praises in which Shakespeare called her 'Diana' than to the insults of Scipio Gentilis, who, taking the pretensions of Elizabeth on the bad side, called her 'Hecate', and applied to her the ancient triple curse, *Mormo! Bómbo! Gorgo!* As for James I, whom Henry IV called 'Master James', he gave, as we have seen, the privilege of the Globe to Shakespeare, but he willingly forbade

[1] Only the last clause of the sentence is accurate. For the nature of the important service rendered by Shakespeare to Ben Jonson, see Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines*, pp. 148–50. That Ben Jonson was envious of Shakespeare is doubtless as untrue as that he was an 'indifferent poet.' 'I loved the man' he said after Shakespeare's death 'and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any.' TR.

the publication of his pieces. Some contemporaries, Dr Simon Forman among others, so far took notice of Shakespeare as to make a note of the occupation of an evening passed at the performance of *The Merchant of Venice* [1]! That was all he knew of glory [2]. Shakespeare, once dead, entered into oblivion.

From 1640 to 1660 the Puritans abolished art and shut up the play-houses. The whole theatre was shrouded as in a winding-sheet. With Charles II the drama revived, without Shakespeare. The false taste of Louis XIV had invaded England. Charles II belonged rather to Versailles than London. He had as mistress a French girl, the Duchess of Portsmouth, and as an intimate friend the privy purse of the King of France. Clifford, his favourite, who never entered the Parliament-house without spitting, said: 'It is better for my master to be viceroy under a great monarch like Louis XIV than to be the slave of five hundred insolent English subjects.' These were no longer the days of the Commonwealth,—the time when Cromwell took the title of 'Protector of England and France', and forced this same Louis XIV to accept the title of 'King of the French'.

Under this restoration of the Stuarts, Shakespeare's eclipse became complete. He was so thoroughly dead that Davenant, his putative son, recomposed his pieces. There was no longer any *Macbeth* but the *Macbeth* of Davenant. Dryden speaks of Shakespeare on one occasion in order to say that he is 'out of

[1] See note p. 13.

[2] Apart from the commendatory verses prefixed to the folio of 1623, Halliwell-Phillipps (*Outlines*, pp. 569–82) cites no less than eighteen contemporary references by name to the great dramatist, substantially all of them eulogistic. It would be strange indeed if that pre-eminently dramatic age should have left the discovery of Shakespeare's genius as a playwright to be made in an age of dramatic decay. Considering that no one took pains to preserve testimony of any kind with reference to Shakespeare, the evidence of his great popularity—not to say pre-eminence—in his own time is in truth remarkably abundant. Tr.

date'. Lord Shaftesbury calls him 'a wit out of fashion'[1]. Dryden and Shaftesbury were two oracles. Dryden, a converted Catholic, had two sons, ushers in the chamber of Clement XI; he made tragedies worthy of being put into Latin verse, as Atterbury's hexameters prove, and he was the servant of that James II who, before he became king on his own account, had asked of his brother, Charles II 'Why don't you hang Milton?' The Earl of Shaftesbury, a friend of Locke, was the man who wrote an *Essay on Sprightliness in Important Conversations*, and who, by the manner in which Chancellor Hyde helped his daughter to the wing of a chicken, divined that she was secretly married to the Duke of York.

These two men having condemned Shakespeare, the oracle had spoken. England, a country more obedient to conventional opinion than is generally believed, forgot Shakespeare. Some purchaser pulled down his house, New Place. A Rev. Dr Cartrell cut down and burned his mulberry-tree. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the eclipse[2] was total. In 1707, a certain Nahum Tate published a *King Lear*, informing his readers 'that he had borrowed

[1] Dryden spoke of Shakespeare often, sometimes critically, but always with the highest respect. It was he who wrote in the prologue to *The Tempest*:

> But Shakespeare's magic could not copied be;
> Within that circle none durst walk but he.

And in the dedication to *The Rival Ladies*, he refers to Shakespeare as one 'who, with some errors not to be avoided in that age, had undoubtedly a larger soul of poesy than ever any of our nation.' Tr.

[2] Victor Hugo's smoked glass very much darkens the 'eclipse' of Shakespeare at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Gerard Langbaine, in his *Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (Oxford, 1691), says: 'I esteem his plays beyond any that have ever been published in our language. Again: 'I should think I were guilty of an injury beyond pardon to his memory, should I so far disparage it as to bring his wit in competition with any in our age.' That Langbaine was not alone in thinking thus, there is plenty of evidence. See foot-note, p. 23. Tr.

the idea of it from a play which he had read by chance, the work of some nameless author'. This 'nameless author' was Shakespeare [1].

CHAPTER V

In 1728 Voltaire imported from England to France the name of Will Shakespeare; only, instead of Will, he pronounced it *Gilles*.

Jeering began in France, and oblivion continued in England. What the Irishman Nahum Tate had done for *King Lear*, others did for other pieces. *All's Well that Ends Well* had successively two 'arrangers', Pilon for the Haymarket, and Kemble for Drury Lane. Shakespeare existed no longer, and counted no longer. *Much Ado About Nothing* served likewise as a rough draft twice,—for Davenant in 1673; for James Miller in 1737. *Cymbeline* was recast four times,—under James II at the Theatre Royal, by Thomas Dursey; in 1695 by Charles Marsh; in 1759 by W. Hawkins; in 1761 by Garrick. *Coriolanus* was recast four times,—in 1682, for the Theatre Royal, by Tate; in 1720, for Drury Lane, by John Dennis;

[1] The statement that Tate styled the original *Lear* the work of 'some nameless author' is piquant, but untrue. His Dedication names Shakespeare repeatedly, and 'in a tone of reverence.' He speaks of his own work as a 'revival' of Shakespeare's, and his Epilogue concludes with,

> This Play's Reviver humbly do's admit
> Your abs'lute Pow'r to damn his part of it:
> But still so many Master-Touches shine
> Of that vast Hand that first laid this Design
> That in great *Shakespear's* right, He's bold to say,
> If you like nothing you have seen this Day,
> The Play your Judgment damns, not you the Play.

It may be added that Victor Hugo advances by about a quarter of a century the date of Tate's 'revival' of *Lear*, which had been before the public seven or eight years when Langbaine wrote the remarks quoted in the preceding note. The reader may be willing to be reminded that this 'certain' Nahum Tate succeeded Shadwell (Dryden's successor) as poet laureate of England. Tr.

in 1755, for Covent Garden, by Thomas Sheridan; in 1801, for Drury Lane, by Kemble. *Timon of Athens* was recast four times,—at the Duke's Theatre, in 1678, by Shadwell; in 1768, at the theatre of Richmond Green, by James Love; in 1771, at Drury Lane, by Cumberland; in 1786, at Covent Garden, by Hull.

In the eighteenth century the persistent raillery of Voltaire finally produced in England a certain revival of interest. Garrick, while correcting Shakespeare, played him, and acknowledged that it was Shakespeare that he played. They reprinted him at Glasgow. An imbecile, Malone, made commentaries on his plays, and, as a logical sequence, whitewashed his tomb. There was on this tomb a little bust, of a doubtful resemblance, and indifferent as a work of art, but venerable from the fact that it was contemporaneous with Shakespeare. It is after this bust that all the portraits of Shakespeare have been made that we now see. The bust was whitewashed. Malone, critic and whitewasher of Shakespeare, spread a coat of plaster over his face, and of stupid nonsense over his work.

BOOK II

MEN OF GENIUS

CHAPTER I

HIGH Art, using this word in its absolute sense, is the region of Equals.

Before going farther, let us fix the value of this expression, 'Art', which often occurs in this book.

We speak of Art as we speak of Nature. Here are two terms of almost indeterminate meaning; to pronounce the one or the other of these words —Nature, Art— is to make a conjuration, to call forth the ideal from the deeps, to draw aside one of the two great curtains of the divine creation. God manifests himself to us in the first degree through the life of the universe, and in the second through the thought of man. The second manifestation is not less holy than the first. The first is named Nature, the second is named Art. Hence this reality: the poet is a priest.

There is here below a pontiff,—it is genius. *Sacerdos Magnus.*

Art is the second branch of Nature.

Art is as natural as Nature.

By the word GOD—let us fix the sense of this word also—we mean the Living Infinite.

The latent Ego of the visible Infinite, that is God.

God is the invisible made evident.

The world concentrated, is God. God expanded, is the world.

We, who are speaking, believe in nothing out of God.

That being said, let us proceed. God creates Art by man, having for a tool the human intellect. The

great Workman has made this tool for himself; he has no other.

Forbes, in the curious little work perused by Warburton and lost by Garrick, affirms that Shakespeare devoted himself to the practice of magic, that magic was in his family, and that what little good there was in his pieces was dictated to him by a familir spirit.

Let us say concerning this—for we must not draw back from any question that may arise—that it has been a strange error of all ages to desire to give the human intellect assistance from without. *Antrum adjuvat vatem.* The work appearing superhuman, people wish to exhibit the intervention of the extra-human: in antiquity, the tripod; in our days, the table. The table is nothing but the tripod come again. To accept in a literal sense the demon that Socrates talks of, the bush of Moses, the nymph of Numa, the spirit of Plotinus, and Mahomet's dove, is to be the victim of a metaphor.

On the other hand, the table, turning or talking, has been very much laughed at. To speak plainly, this raillery is out of place. To replace inquiry by mockery is convenient, but not very scientific. For our part, we think that the strict duty of Science is to test all phenomena. Science is ignorant, and has no right to laugh: a *savant* who laughs at the possible, is very near being an idiot. The unexpected ought always to be expected by Science. Her duty is to stop it in its course and search it, rejecting the chimerical, establishing the real. Science has but the right to put a *visa* on facts; she should verify and distinguish. All human knowledge is but picking and culling. The circumstance that the false is mingled with the true, furnishes no excuse for rejecting the whole mass. When was the tare an excuse for refusing the corn? Hoe out the weed error, but reap the fact, and place it beside others. Science is the sheaf of facts.

The mission of Science is to study and sound everything. All of us, according to our degree, are the creditors of investigation; we are its debtors also. It is due to us, and we owe it to others. To evade a phenomenon, to refuse to pay it that attention to which it has a right, to bow it out, to show it the door, to turn our back on it laughing, is to make truth a bankrupt, and to leave the signature of Science to be protested. The phenomenon of the tripod of old, and of the table of to-day, is entitled, like anything else, to investigation. Psychic science will gain by it, without doubt. Let us add, that to abandon phenomena to credulity, is to commit treason against human reason.

Homer affirms that the tripods of Delphi walked of their own accord; and he explains the fact (book xviii of the *Iliad*) by saying that Vulcan forged invisible wheels for them. The explanation does not much simplify the phenomenon. Plato relates that the statues of Dædalus gesticulated in the darkness, had wills of their own, and resisted their master, and that he was obliged to tie them up, so that they might not walk off. Strange dogs at the end of a chain! Fléchier mentions, at page 52 of his *History of Theodosius*,—referring to the great conspiracy of the magicians of the fourth century against the Emperor,—a tipping table, of which we shall perhaps speak elsewhere, in order to say what Fléchier did not say, and seemed not to know. This table was covered with a round plating of several metals, *ex diversis metallicis materiis fabrefacta*, like the copper and zinc plates employed at present in biological investigation. So it appears that this phenomenon, always rejected and always reappearing, is not an affair of yesterday.

Besides, whatever credulity has said or thought about it, this phenomenon of the tripods and tables is without any connection with the inspiration of the poets,—an inspiration entirely direct. This is the point at which we have been aiming. The sibyl

has a tripod, the poet none; the poet is himself a tripod, the tripod of divinity itself. God has not made this marvellous distillery of thought,—the brain of man,—in order to make no use of it. The man of genius has need of no apparatus but his brain; through it his every thought must pass. Thought ascends, and buds from the brain, as the fruit from the root. Thought is the resultant of man; the root plunges into the earth, the brain into God,—that is to say, into the Infinite.

Those who imagine (there are such, witness Forbes) that a poem like *Le Médecin de son Honneur* or *King Lear* can be dictated by a tripod or a table, err in a strange fashion; these works are the works of man. God has no need to make a piece of wood aid Shakespeare or Calderon.

Then let us set aside the tripod. Poetry is the poet's own. Let us be respectful before the possible, of which no one knows the limit. Let us be attentive and serious before the extra-human, out of which we come, and which awaits us; but let us not degrade the great workers of the world by hypotheses of a mysterious assistance which is not necessary; let us leave to the brain that which belongs to it, and agree that the productions of genius are a superhuman offspring of man.

CHAPTER II

SUPREME Art is the region of Equals. There is no primacy among masterpieces.

Like water, which heated to a hundred degrees will bear no increase of temperature, human thought attains in certain men its maximum intensity. Æschylus, Job, Phidias, Isaiah, Saint Paul, Juvenal, Dante, Michael Angelo, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Beethoven, with some others, rise to the hundredth degree of genius.

The human mind has a summit,—the ideal; to this summit God descends, man rises.

In each age three or four men of genius undertake the ascent. From below the world's eyes follow them. These men go up the mountain, enter into the clouds, disappear, reappear. People watch them, mark them. They skirt precipices; a false step would not displease certain of the lookers-on. They daringly pursue their road. See them aloft, already afar; they are no longer anything but black specks. 'How small they are'! says the crowd. They are giants. On they go. The road is rugged, the scarped cliff resists them. At each step a wall, at each step a pitfall. As they rise, the cold increases. They must make their ladder, cut the ice, and walk on it, converting obstacles into a stairway. Every storm is raging. Nevertheless, these madmen make their way. The air becomes difficult to breathe, the abyss widens around them. Some fall: they have done well. Others stop, and retrace their steps; there is sad weariness. Some intrepid ones continue; the elect persevere. The dreadful declivity crumbles beneath them and seeks to sweep them away; glory is treacherous. Eagles eye them; lightnings blunt their bolts upon them; the hurricane is furious. No matter, they persist, they press upward. He who reaches the summit is thy equal, O Homer!

Repeat the names we have mentioned, and those which we might have added. To choose between these men is impossible. There is no method for striking the balance between Rembrandt and Michael Angelo.

Confining ourselves solely to the authors and poets, let us examine them one after the other. Which is the greatest? Every one.

1. One, Homer, is the huge poet-child. The world is born, Homer sings: he is the bird of this dawn. Homer has the holy candour of morning. The shadow is almost unknown to him. Chaos, heaven, earth,

Geo and Ceto, Jove god of gods, Agamemnon king of kings, peoples, flocks from the beginning, temples, towns, battles, harvests, the ocean: Diomedes fighting, Ulysses wandering; the meanderings of a ship seeking its home; the Cyclops, the Pygmies; a map of the world with a crown of gods upon Olympus, and here and there a glimpse of Erebus through furnace-mouths; priests, virgins, mothers, little children frightened by the plumes, the unforgetting dog, great words which fall from grey-beards, loving friendships, the passions and the hydras, Vulcan for the laugh of the gods, Thersites for the laugh of men; the two aspects of married life summed up for the benefit of the centuries in Helen and in Penelope; the Styx, Destiny, the heel of Achilles, without which Destiny would be vanquished by the Styx; monsters, heroes, men, a thousand perspectives glimpsing in the haze of the antique world,—this is Homer. Troy coveted, Ithaca longed for. Homer is war and travel,—the two first methods for the meeting of mankind. The camp attacks the fortress, the ship attacks the unknown by penetrating it; around war every passion; around travel every kind of adventure; two gigantic groups: the first, bloody, is called the *Iliad*, the second, luminous, is called the *Odyssey*. Homer makes men preternaturally big; they hurl at each other masses of rock which twelve yoke of oxen could not move; the gods hardly care to have to deal with them. Minerva takes Achilles by the hair; he turns around in anger: 'What wouldst thou with me, goddess?' There is, however, no monotony in these puissant figures. These giants are graduated. After each hero, Homer breaks the mould. Ajax son of Oïleus is less high in stature than Ajax son of Telamon. Homer is one of the men of genius who solve that fine problem of art,—the finest of all, perhaps,—truly to depict humanity by the enlargement of man: that is, to generate the real in the ideal. Fable and history, hypothesis and tradition, the chimera and knowledge, make up Homer.

He is fathomless, and he is cheerful. All the depth of ancient days moves, radiant and luminous, in the vast azure of his mind. Lycurgus, that peevish sage, half a Solon and half a Draco, was conquered by Homer. He turned out of the way, while travelling, to go and read, at the house of Cleophilus, Homer's poems, placed there in remembrance of the hospitality that Homer, it is said, had formerly received in that house. Homer, to the Greeks, was a god; he had priests, the Homerides. Alcibiades gave a rhetorician a cuff for boasting that he had never read Homer. The divinity of Homer has survived Paganism. Michael Angelo said, 'When I read Homer, I look at myself to see if I am not twenty feet in height.' Tradition will have it that the first verse of the *Iliad* is a verse of Orpheus; and this tradition, doubling Homer by Orpheus, increased in Greece the religion of Homer. The shield of Achilles, book xviii of the *Iliad*, was explained in the temples by Danco, daughter of Pythagoras. Homer, like the sun, has planets. Virgil who writes the *Æncid*, Lucan who writes the *Pharsalia*, Tasso who writes the *Jerusalem*, Ariosto with his *Roland*, Milton with *Paradise Lost*, Camoëns with the *Lusiad*, Klopstock with the *Messiah*, Voltaire with the *Henriade*, all gravitate about Homer, and, sending back to their own moons his light reflected at different angles, move at unequal distances within his boundless orbit. Such is Homer; such is the beginning of the epic.

2. Another, Job, begins the drama. This embryo is a colossus. Job begins the drama, now forty centuries ago, by placing Jehovah and Satan in presence of each other; the evil defies the good, and behold! the action is begun. The scene is laid upon the earth, and man is the field of battle; the plagues are the actors. One of the wildest grandeurs of this poem is, that in it the sun is baleful. The sun is in Job as in Homer; but it is no longer the dawn, it is high noon. The mournful oppression of the brazen

ray, falling perpendicularly on the desert, pervades the poem, which is heated to a white heat. Job sweats on his dunghill. The shadow of Job is small and black, and hidden under him, as the snake under the rock. Tropical flies buzz on his sores. Job has above his head the frightful Arabian sun—a breeder of monsters, an intensifier of plagues, which changes the cat into the tiger, the lizard into the crocodile, the pig into the rhinoceros, the snake into the boa, the nettle into the cactus, the wind into the simoom, the miasma into the pestilence. Job is anterior to Moses. Afar in the ages, by the side of Abraham the Hebrew patriarch, there is Job the Arabian patriarch. Before being tried, he had been happy: 'this man was the greatest of all men of the East', says his poem. This was the labourer-king: he exercised the immense priesthood of solitude: he sacrificed and sanctified. Toward evening he gave the earth the blessing, the *berachah*. He was learned; he was acquainted with rhythm; his poem, of which the Arabian text is lost, was written in verse: this, at least, is certain from verse 3 of chapter iii to the end. He was good; he did not meet a poor child without throwing him the small coin *kesitha*; he was the foot of the lame, and the eye of the blind'. It is from this that he has fallen, he becomes gigantic. The whole poem of Job is the development of this idea,—the greatness that may be found at the bottom of the pit. Job is more majestic when unfortunate than when prosperous; his leprosy is a robe of purple. His misery terrifies those who are there; they speak not to him until after a silence of seven days and seven nights. His lamentation is marked by a certain tranquil and gloomy magianism. While crushing the vermin on his ulcers, he apostrophizes the stars. He addresses Orion, the Hyades,—which he names the Pleiades,— and 'the chambers of the south'. He says, 'God setteth an end to darkness'. He calls the diamonds which are hidden, 'the stones of dark-

ness'. He mingles with his own distress the misfortune of others, and has tragic words that freeze,—'the widow is empty'.[1] He smiles also and is then still more terrible. He has around him Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, three implacable types of the friendly busybody, of whom he says, 'You play on me as on a tambourine'. His language, submissive toward God, is bitter toward kings: 'kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves',—leaving our wit to find out whether he speaks of their tomb or of their kingdom. Tacitus says, *solitudinem faciunt*. As to Jehovah, Job adores him; and under the furious scourging of the plagues, all his resistance is confined to asking of God: 'How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?' That dates from four thousand years ago. At the same hour, perhaps, when the enigmatical astronomer of Denderah carves in the granite his mysterious zodiac, Job engraves his on human thought; and his zodiac is not made of stars, but of miseries. This zodiac turns yet above our heads. We have of Job only the Hebrew version, attributed to Moses. The thought of such a poet, followed by such a translator, is impressive: the man of the dunghill translated by the man of Sinai! Job is in reality a priest and a seer. Job extracts from his drama a dogma; he suffers, and draws an inference. Now, to suffer and draw an inference is to teach; sorrow leads logically to God. Job teaches; having touched the summit of the drama, he stirs the depths of philosophy. He first shows that sublime madness of wisdom which, two thousand years later, in resignation making itself a sacrifice, will be the foolishness of the cross—*stultitiam crucis*. The dunghill of Job, transfigured, will become the Calvary of Jesus.

3. Another, Æschylus, enlightened by the uncon-

[1] Is this an error? Job xxii 9 reads, 'Thou hast sent widows away empty'. And where is the next quotation found? Tr.

scious divination of genius, without suspecting that he has behind him, in the East, the resignation of Job, completes it, unwittingly, by the revolt of Prometheus; so that the lesson may be complete, and that the human race, to whom Job has taught but duty, shall feel in Prometheus the dawn of right. There is something ghastly in Æschylus from one end to the other; there is a vague outline of an extraordinary Medusa behind the figures in the foreground. Æschylus is splendid and formidable; as though you saw a frowning brow above the sun. He has two Cains, Etoocles and Polynices; Genesis has but one. His troop of Oceanides comes and goes under a dark sky, like a flock of driven birds. Æschylus has none of the recognized proportions. He is shaggy, abrupt, excessive, unsusceptible of softened contour, almost savage, with a grace all his own like that of the flowers of wild nooks, less haunted by the nymphs than by the furies, siding with the Titans, among the goddesses choosing the austere and greeting the Gorgons with a sinister smile, like Othryx and Briareus a son of the soil, and ready to scale the skies anew against the upstart Jupiter. Æschylus is ancient mystery made man; something like a Pagan prophet. His work, if we had it all, would be a kind of Greek Bible. Poet hundred-handed, having an Orestes more fatal than Ulysses and a Thebes grander than Troy, hard as rock, tumultuous like the foam, full of steeps, torrents, and precipices, and such a giant that at times one might take him for a mountain. Coming later than the *Iliad*, he has the air of an elder brother of Homer.

4. Another, Isaiah, seems placed above humanity, and resembles a rumbling of continual thunder. He is the great reproacher. His style, a kind of nocturnal cloud, is lighted up with images which suddenly empurple all the depths of his obscure thought, and make us exclaim, 'It lightens!' Isaiah engages in battle, hand to hand, with the evil which, in civilization, makes its appearance before the good. He cries

'Silence!' at the noise of chariots, of festivals, of triumphs. The foam of his prophecy falls even on Nature; he gives Babylon over to the moles and bats, Nineveh to the briers, Tyre to ashes, Jerusalem to night; he fixes a date for oppressors, warns the powers of their approaching end, assigns a day against idols, against high citadels, against the fleets of Tarsus, against all the cedars of Lebanon, and against all the oaks of Bashan. He stands upon the threshold of civilization, and he refuses to enter. He is a kind of mouthpiece of the desert speaking to the multitudes, and demanding, in the name of the sands, the brambles, and the winds, the sites of the cities. And this upon the score of justice: because the tyrant and the slave, that is to say, pride and shame, exist wherever there are walled enclosures; because evil is there incarnate in man; because in solitude there is but the beast, while in the city there is the monster. Those things with which Isaiah reproached his time,—idolatry, debauchery, war, prostitution, ignorance,—still exist. Isaiah is the undying contemporary of the vices that make themselves servants, and of the crimes that make themselves kings.

5. Another, Ezekiel, is the wild soothsayer: a genius of the cavern, whose thought is best expressed by a beast-like growling. But listen. This savage makes a prophecy to the world,—the prophecy of progress. Nothing more astonishing. Ah! Isaiah overthrows? Very well! Ezekiel will reconstruct. Isaiah refuses civilization; Ezekiel accepts, but transforms it. Nature and humanity blend together in that softened howl which Ezekiel utters. The conception of duty is in Job; in Æschylus, the conception of right. Ezekiel introduces the resultant third conception,—the human race ameliorated, the future more and more emancipated. It is man's consolation that the future is to be a sunrise instead of a sunset. Time present works for time to come; work, then, and hope! Such is Ezekiel's cry. Ezekiel

is in Chaldæa, and from Chaldæa he sees distinctly Judæa, just as from oppression one may see liberty. He declares peace as others declare war. He prophesies harmony, goodness, gentleness, union, the blending of races, love. Notwithstanding, he is terrible. He is the fierce benefactor, the universal, beneficent grumbler at the human race. He scolds, he almost gnashes his teeth, and people fear and hate him. The men about are thorns to him. 'I live among the briers', he says. He condemns himself to be a symbol, and makes of his person, become hideous, a sign of human misery and popular degradation. He is a kind of voluntary Job. In his town, in his house, he causes himself to be bound with cords, and remains mute: behold the slave! In the public place he eats filth: behold the courtier! This causes Voltaire's laughter to burst forth, and our sobs. Ah, Ezekiel, so far does thy devotion go! Thou renderest shame visible by horror; thou compellest ignominy to avert the head when recognizing herself in ordure; thou showest that to accept a man as master is to eat filth; thou causest a shudder to the sycophants who follow the prince, by putting into thy stomach what they put into their souls; thou preachest deliverance by vomiting. Accept our veneration! This man, this being, this figure, this swine-prophet, is sublime. And the transfiguration that he announces, he proves. How? By transfiguring himself. From this horrible and defiled mouth there issues splendid poetry. Never has grander language been spoken, never more extraordinary. 'I saw visions of God. A whirlwind came out of the North, and a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself. I saw a chariot, and a likeness of four living creatures. Above the living creatures and the chariot was a space like a terrible crystal. The wheels of the chariot were made of eyes, and so high that they were dreadful. The noise of the wings of the four angels was as the voice of the Almighty, and when they stood they let down their wings. And I saw a likeness which

was as fire, and which put forth a hand. And a voice said, "The kings and the judges have in their souls gods of dung. I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh" . . . I came to them that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I remained there astonished among them seven days'. And again: 'There was a plain and dry bones, and I said, "Bones, rise up"; and when I beheld, lo! the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. And I cried, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live!" The spirit came. The breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then the voice said, "Ye shall be one nation, ye shall have no king or judge but me; and I will be the God who has one people, and ye shall be the people who have one God".' Is not everything there? Search for a higher formula, you will not find it: a free man under a sovereign God. This visionary eater of filth is a resuscitator. Ezekiel has offal on his lips, and the sun in his eyes. Among the Jews the reading of Ezekiel was dreaded, and was not permitted before the age of thirty years. The rabbis, disturbed, put a seal upon this poet. People could not call him an impostor: his prophetic fury was incontestable; he had evidently seen what he related: thence his authority. His very enigmas made him an oracle. They could not tell who were meant by those women sitting toward the North weeping for Tammuz [1]; impossible to divine what was the *hashmal*, this metal which he pictured as in

[1] Ezekiel viii 14. This 'enigma' was not such to Milton, who sings of Zion's daughters,

> Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch
> Ezekiel saw, when, by the vision led,
> His eye surveyed the dark idolatries
> Of alienated Judah.
>
> *Paradise Lost*, i 446 *seq.*

fusion in the furnace of the dream [1]. But nothing was more clear than his vision of Progress. Ezekiel saw the quadruple man,—man, ox, lion, and eagle; that is to say, the master of thought, the master of the field, the master of the desert, the master of the air. Nothing is forgotten; it is the entire future, from Aristotle to Christopher Columbus, from Triptolemus to Montgolfier. Later on, the Gospel also will become quadruple in the four evangelists, making Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John subservient to man, the ox, the lion, and the eagle, and, remarkable fact, to symbolize progress it will take the four faces of Ezekiel. Furthermore, Ezekiel, like Christ, calls himself the 'Son of Man'. Jesus often in his parables invokes and cites Ezekiel; and this kind of first Messiah makes precedents for the second. There are in Ezekiel three constructions,—man, in whom he places progress; the temple, where he puts a light that he calls 'glory'; the city, where he places God. He cries to the temple, 'No priests here, neither they, nor their kings, nor the carcases of their kings' (xliii 7) [2]. One cannot help thinking that this Ezekiel, a species of Biblical demagogue, would help '93 in the terrible sweeping of St Denis. As for the city built by him, he mutters above it this mysterious name, *Jehovah Schammah*, which signifies 'the Eternal is there.' Then, standing silent in the darkness, he shows men, on the far horizon, an ever-widening space of azure sky.

6. Another, Lucretius, is that vast, obscure thing, All. Jupiter is in Homer; Jehovah is in Job; in Lucretius, Pan appears. Such is Pan's greatness, that he has under him Destiny, which is above Jupiter. Lucretius has travelled and he has mused, and musing

[1] The mysterious word *hashmal* is rendered by 'amber' in our common version (Ezekiel i 4). TR.

[2] The curious reader will discover that the citations from Ezekiel are either paraphrased or garbled, or both. Pedantic exactitude is not one of Hugo's faults. TR.

is another form of travel. He has been at Athens; he has been in the haunts of philosophers; he has studied Greece and divined India. Democritus has set him to thinking about the molecule, and Anaximander about space. His dreams have become doctrine. Nothing is known of the incidents of his life. Like Pythagoras, he has frequented the two mysterious schools of the Euphrates, Neharda and Pombeditha, and he may have met there the Jewish doctors. He has deciphered the papyri of Sepphoris, which in his time was not yet transformed into Diocæsarea; he has lived with the pearl-fishers of the Isle of Tylos. We find in the Apocrypha traces of a strange ancient itinerary, recommended, according to some, to philosophers by Empedocles, the magician of Agrigentum, and, according to others, to the rabbis by the high-priest Eleazer, who corresponded with Ptolemy Philadelphus. This itinerary would have served at a later time as a model for the journeyings of the Apostles. The traveller who followed this itinerary traversed the five satrapies of the country of the Philistines; visited the people who charm serpents and suck poisonous sores,—the Psylli; drank of the torrent Bosor, which marks the frontier of Arabia Deserta; then touched and handled the bronze collar of Andromeda, still sealed to the rock of Joppa; Baalbec in Cœle-Syria; Apamea on the Orontes, where Nicanor fed his elephants; the harbour of Ezion-geber, where rode the vessels of Ophir, laden with gold; Segher, which produced white incense, preferred to that of Hadramauth; the two Syrtes; Smaragdus, the mountain of emerald; the Nasamones, who pillaged the shipwrecked; the black nation, Agyzimba; Adribe, the city of crocodiles; Cynopolis, the city of dogs; the wonderful cities of Comagena, Claudia, and Barsalium; perhaps even Tadmor, the city of Solomon; such were the stages of this almost fabulous pilgrimage of the thinkers. Did Lucretius make this pilgrimage? One cannot tell. His nu-

merous travels are beyond doubt. He has seen so many men that at the last to his eye they all seem indistinguishably blended, and have become to him a spectral multitude. He is arrived at that excess of simplification of the universe which almost causes it to disappear. He has sounded until he feels the plummet float. He has questioned the vague spectres of Byblos; he has conversed with the tree-trunk cut from Cithæron, which represents Juno Thespia. Perhaps he has spoken in the reeds to Oannes, the man-fish of Chaldæa, who had two heads,—at the top, the head of a man, below, the head of a hydra,—and who, drinking up chaos by his lower gullet, revomited it on the earth through his upper mouth in the form of dreadful knowledge. Isaiah stands next to the archangels, Lucretius to the spectres. Lucretius twists the ancient veil of Isis, steeped in the waters, of darkness, and wrings from it sometimes in torrents sometimes drop by drop, a sombre poesy. The boundless is in Lucretius. At times there passes a powerful spondaic verse, almost monstrous, and full of shadow:

Circum se froliis ac frondibus involventes.

Here and there a vast image of pairing is dimly outlined in the forest:

Tunc Venus in sylvis jungebat corpora amantum

and the forest is Nature. These verses are impossible with Virgil. Lucretius turns his back on humanity, and fixes his gaze upon the enigma. His searching spirit is placed between that reality, the atom, and that impossibility, the vacuum: by turns attracted by these two precipices, he is religious when he contemplates the atom, sceptical when he perceives the void; thence his two aspects, equally profound, of denial and of affirmation. One day this traveller commits suicide. This is his last departure. He puts himself *en route* for Death. He wishes to see for himself. He has embarked successively upon

every sort of vessel,—on the galley of Trevirium for Sanastrea in Macedonia; on the trireme of Carystos for Metapontum [1] in Greece; on the Cyllenian skiff for the Island of Samothrace; on the *sandale* of Samothrace for Naxos, the home of Bacchus; on the *ceroscaph* of Naxos for Syria; on the Syrian pinnace for Egypt; and on the ship of the Red Sea for India. It remains for him to make one voyage: he is curious about the dark country; he takes passage on the coffin, and slipping the hawser himself, he pushes off into the shadow the obscure barque that is tossed by an unknown sea.

7. Another, Juvenal, has everything in which Lucretius fails,—passion, emotion, fever, tragic flame, passion for honesty, the avenging sneer, personality, humanity. He dwells at a certain given point in creation, and he contents himself with it, finding there what may nourish and swell his heart with justice and anger. Lucretius is the universe, Juvenal the locality. And what a locality! Rome. Between the two they are the double voice which speaks to world and town—*urbi et orbi*. As Juvenal hovers above the Roman Empire, one hears the terrific flappings of the lämmergeyer's wings above a nest of reptiles. He pounces upon this swarm and takes them, one after the other, in his terrible beak,—from the adder who is emperor and calls himself Nero, to the earthworm who is a bad poet and calls himself Codrus. Isaiah and Juvenal has each his harlot; but there is one thing more ominous than the shadow of Babel,—it is the creaking of the bed of the Cæsars; and Babylon is less formidable than Messalina. Juvenal is the ancient free spirit of the dead republics; in him there is a Rome of that metal in which Athens and Sparta were cast. Thence in his poetry something of Aristophanes and something of Lycurgus. Beware of him; he is severe! Not a cord is wanting to his

[1] Metapontum was a Greek colony in Lucania. Sanastrea the translator is unable to find. TR.

lyre, nor to the lash he uses. He is lofty, rigid, austere, glowing, violent, grave, inexhaustible in imagery, harshly gracious, too, when he chooses. His cynicism is the indignation of modesty. His grace, thoroughly independent and a true figure of liberty, has claws; it appears all at once, enlivening by certain supple and spirited undulations the angular majesty of his hexameter. It is as if you saw the Cat of Corinth prowling upon the pediment of the Parthenon. There is something of the epic on this satire; Juvenal holds in his hand the golden sceptre with which Ulysses beats Thersites. 'Bombast, declamation, exaggeration, hyperbole', cry the slaughtered deformities; and these cries, stupidly repeated by rhetoricians, are a sound of glory. 'To commit these things or to relate them, the crime is equal', say Tillemont, Marc Muret, Garasse, etc.—fools, who, like Muret, are sometimes knaves. Juvenal's invective has been blazing for two thousand years,—a fearful flame of poetry, which burns Rome in the presence of the centuries. The fire still flashes upon that radiant hearth, and, far from diminishing with time, increases under its mournful cloud of smoke. From it proceed rays in behalf of liberty, probity, heroism; and it may be said that Juvenal sends even into our civilization spirits born of his light. What is Régnier? what D'Aubigne? what Corneille? Scintillations from Juvenal.

8. Another, Tacitus, is the historian. Liberty is incarnate in him, as in Juvenal, and ascends, dead, to the seat of judgment, having for a toga her winding-sheet, and summons tyrants to her bar. Juvenal, we have just said, is the soul of a nation embodied in a man; the same is also true of Tacitus. By the side of the poet who condemns, stands the historian who punishes. Tacitus, seated on the curule chair of genius, summons and seizes *in flagrante delicto* those criminals, the Cæsars. The Roman Empire is a long crime. This crime is begun by four demons,

Tiberius,* Caligula, Claudius, Nero. Tiberius, the imperial spy; the eye which watches the world; the first dictator who dared to pervert to his personal service the law of majesty made for the Roman people; knowing Greek, intellectual, sagacious, sarcastic, eloquent, terrible; loved by informers; the murderer of citizens, of knights, of the senate, of his wife, of his family; having rather the air of stabbing nations than of massacring them; humble before the Barbarians; a traitor with Archelaus, a coward with Artabanus; having two thrones,—Rome for his ferocity, Capreæ for his baseness; an inventor of vices and of names for these vices; an old man with a seraglio of young girls; gaunt, bald, crooked, bandy-legged, fetid, eaten up with leprosy, covered with suppurations, masked with plasters, crowned with laurels; having ulcers like Job, and the sceptre besides; surrounded by an oppressive silence; seeking a successor, scenting out Caligula, and finding him good: a viper choosing a tiger. Caligula, the man who has known fear, the slave become master, trembling under Tiberius, terrible after Tiberius, vomiting his fright of yesterday in atrocity. This mad fool has not his equal. An executioner makes a mistake, and kills, instead of the condemned one, an innocent man; Caligula smiles and says, 'The condemned had not more deserved it.' He has a woman eaten alive by dogs, to enjoy the sight. He lies publicly upon his three sisters, all stark naked. One of them dies,—Drusilla; he says, 'Behead those who do not bewail her, for she is my sister; and crucify those who bewail her, for she is a goddess.' He makes his horse a pontiff, as, later on, Nero will make his monkey a god. He offers to the universe the wretched spectacle of the annihilation of intellect by supreme power. A prostitute, a sharper, a robber, breaking the busts of Homer and Virgil, his head dressed as Apollo with rays, and his feet shod with wings like Mercury, frenetically master of the world, desiring incest with his mother,

wishing a plague to his empire, famine to his people, rout to his army, his own resemblance to the gods, and one sole head to the human race, that he might cut it off,—such is Caius Caligula. He forces the son to assist at the torment of the father, and the husband at the violation of the wife, and to laugh. Claudius is a mere sketch of a ruler, a piece of a man made a tyrant, a crowned noodle. He hides himself; they discover him, they drag him from his hole, and they throw him, terrified, upon the throne. Emperor, he still trembles, having the crown, but not sure that he has his head. He feels for his head at times, as if he searched for it. Then he gets more confident, and decrees three new letters to be added to the alphabet. He is a learned man, this idiot. They strangle a senator; he says, 'I did not order it; but since it is done, it is well'. His wife prostitutes herself before him. He looks at her, and says, 'Who is this woman?' He scarcely exists; he is a shadow: but this shadow crushes the world. At length the hour for his departure arrives: his wife poisons him; his doctor finishes him. He says, 'I am saved', and dies. After his death they come to see his corpse; during his life they had seen his ghost. Nero is the most formidable figure of *ennui* that has ever appeared among men. The yawning monster that the ancients called Livor and the moderns call Spleen, gives us this riddle to guess,—Nero. Nero seeks simply a distraction. Poet, comedian, singer, coachman, exhausting ferocity to find voluptuousness, trying a change of sex, the husband of the eunuch Sporus and bride of the slave Pythagoras, and promenading the streets of Rome between his husband and his wife. He has two pleasures,—one, to see the people clutching, gold-pieces, diamonds, and pearls; and the other, to see the lions clutch the people. An incendiary for curiosity's sake, and a matricide for want of employment. It is to these four that Tacitus dedicates his first gibbets. Their reigns he hangs

about their necks like a collar. His book of 'Caligula' is lost. Nothing is easier to comprehend than the loss and obliteration of books of this sort. To read them was a crime. A man having been caught reading the history of Caligula by Suetonius, Commodus had him thrown to the wild beasts. 'Feris objici jussit', says Lampridius. The horror of those days is awful. Manners, below and above stairs, are ferocious. You may judge of the cruelty of the Romans by the atrocity of the Gauls. An insurrection breaks out in Gaul. The peasants place the Roman ladies, naked and still alive, on harrows, whose points enter here and there into the body; then they cut off their breasts and sew them in their mouths, that they may have the appearance of eating them. *Vix vindicta est*, 'this is scarcely retaliation', says the Roman general Turpilianus. These Roman ladies had the practice, while chatting with their lovers, of sticking gold pins in the breasts of the Persian or Gallic slaves who dressed their hair. Such is the human spectacle at which Tacitus is present; the sight of it renders him terrible. He states the facts, and leaves you to draw your own conclusions. It is only in Rome that a Potiphar mother of Joseph is to be met [1]. When Agrippina, reduced to her last resource, seeing her grave in the eyes of her son, offers him her bed, when her lips seek those of Nero, Tacitus is there, following her with his eyes: 'Lasciva oscula et prænuntias flagitii blanditias'; and he denounces to the world this effort of a monstrous and trembling mother to make matricide miscarry by means of incest. Whatever Justus Lipsius, who bequeathed his pen to the Holy Virgin, may have said about it, Domitian exiled Tacitus, and he did well. Men like Tacitus are unwholesome for authority. Tacitus applies his style to the shoulder of an emperor, and the brand remains. Tacitus always makes his

[1] The original reads: 'La Putiphar mère du Joseph c'est ce qu'on ne recontre que dans Rome.' TR.

thrust at the required spot, and leaves a deep scar. Juvenal, all-powerful poet, deals about him, scatters, makes a show, falls and rebounds, strikes right and left a hundred blows at a time, on laws, manners, corrupt magistrates, on bad verses, on libertines and the idle, on Cæsar, on the people, everywhere; he is lavish, like hail; his strokes scatter, like those of the scourge. Tacitus has the incisiveness of red-hot iron.

9. Another, John, is the virginal old man. All the ardent juices of man seem subtilized within him, filling his brain with visionary wraiths. One does not escape love. Love, unappeased and discontented, changes itself at the end of life into an outflow of gloomy fancies. The woman wants man; otherwise man, instead of human poetry, will have a phantom poetry. Some beings, however, resist the universal generative tendency, and then they are in that peculiar state in which men are subject to monstrous inspirations. The Apocalypse is the almost insane masterpiece of this dreadful chastity. John, while young, was gentle and shy. Having loved Jesus, he could love nothing else. There is a profound resemblance between the Song of Songs and the Apocalypse; they are both explosions of pent-up virginity. The heart, mighty volcano, bursts into eruption; there proceeds from it this dove, the Song of Songs, or this dragon, the Apocalypse. These two poems are the two poles of ecstasy,—voluptuousness and horror; the two extreme limits of the soul are attained. In the first poem ecstasy exhausts love, in the second, terror; and this ecstasy inspires in mankind, henceforth for ever disquieted, the dread of the eternal precipice. Another resemblance, not less worthy of attention, there is between John and Daniel. The nearly invisible thread of affinity is carefully followed by the eye of those who see in the prophetic spirit a human and normal phenomenon, and who, far from disdaining the question of miracles, generalize it,

and calmly connect it with permanent laws. Religions lose, and science gains by the process. It has not been sufficiently remarked that the seventh chapter of Daniel contains the germ of the Apocalypse. Empires are there represented as beasts. Legend has therefore associated the two poets, making the one pass through the lions' den, and the other through the caldron of boiling oil. Independently of the legend, the life of John is noble, an exemplary life, subject to marvellous expansions, passing from Golgotha to Patmos, and from the execution of the Messiah to the exile of the prophet. John, after having been present at the sufferings of Christ, ends by suffering on his own account. The suffering seen makes him an apostle, the suffering endured makes him a sage; from the growth of the trial results the growth of the spirit. Bishop, he writes the Gospel; proscribed, he composes the Apocalypse, a tragic work, written under the dictation of an eagle, the poet having above his head we know not what mournful flapping of wings. The whole Bible is between two dreamers, Moses and John. This poem of poems emerges from chaos in Genesis, and passes out of view amid the thunders of the Apocalypse. John was one of the great wanderers of the tongue of fire. During the Last Supper his head was on the breast of Jesus, and he could say, 'Mine ear has heard the beating of God's heart'. He went about to relate it to men. He spoke a barbarous Greek, mingled with Hebrew expressions and Syrian words,—a language of a wild, harsh charm. He went to Ephesus, he went to Media, he went among the Parthians. He dared to enter Ctesiphon, a town of the Parthians, built as a counterpoise to Babylon. He faced the living idol, Cobaris, king, god, and man, for ever immovable on his pierced block of nephritic jade, which serves him as throne and latrine. He evangelized Persia, which the Scriptures call Paras. When he appeared at the Council of Jerusalem, he was

regarded as a pillar of the Church. He looked with stupefaction at Cerinthus and Ebion, who said that Jesus was but a man. When they questioned him upon the mystery, he answered, 'Love one another'. He died at the age of ninety-four years, under Trajan. According to tradition, he is not dead; he is spared, and John is ever living at Patmos, as Barbarossa at Kaiserslautern [1]. Caverns there are in which these mysterious mortals are waiting. John as an historian has his equals,—Matthew, Luke, Mark; as a visionary he is alone. There is no dream that approaches his, such a reach it has into the infinite. His metaphors issue from eternity, perturbed; his poetry has a profound smile of madness. A light reflected from the Most High is in the eye of this man: it is the sublime in full aberration. Men do not understand it—scorn it, and laugh. 'My dear Thiriot', says Voltaire 'the Apocalypse is a piece of ordure'. Religions, being in want of this book, have taken to worshipping it; but it had to be placed upon the altar in order to save it from the ditch. What does it matter? John is a spirit. It is in John of Patmos, above all others, that the communication between certain men of genius and the abyss is apparent. In all other poets we guess this communication; in John we see it, at moments we touch it, and seem to lay a shuddering hand upon that sombre portal. It is the door that leads toward God. In reading the poem of Patmos, some one seems to push you from behind; the dread entrance, vaguely outlined, arouses mingled terror and longing. Were this all of John, he would still be colossal.

10. Another, Paul, a saint for the Church, a great man for humanity, represents that miracle, at once divine and human, conversion. It is he to whom the future has appeared. It leaves him haggard; and nothing can be more superb than this face, for ever

[1] On Kyffhäuser, the German legends say. Tr.

wondering, of the man conquered by the light. Paul, born a Pharisee, had been a weaver of camel's-hair for tents, and servant of one of the judges of Jesus Christ, Gamaliel; then the Scribes, perceiving his fierce spirit, had educated him. He was a man of the past, he had guarded the clothes of the stone-throwers; he aspired, having studied with the priests, to become an executioner; he was on the road for this. All at once a wave of light emanates from the darkness and throws him down from his horse; and henceforth there will be in the history of the human race that wonderful thing,—the road to Damascus. That day of the metamorphosis of Saint Paul is a great day,—keep the date; it corresponds to the 25th of January in our Gregorian calendar. The road to Damascus is essential to the march of Progress. To fall into the truth and to rise a just man,—a transfiguring fall,—that is sublime. It is the history of Saint Paul; from his day it will be the history of humanity. The flash of light is something beyond the flash of lightning. Progress will be carried forward by a series of dazzling visions. As for Saint Paul, who has been thrown down by the force of new conviction, this harsh stroke from on high reveals to him his genius. Once more upon his feet, he goes forward; he will not pause again. 'Forward!' is his cry. He is a cosmopolite. He loves the outsiders, whom Paganism calls Barbarians, and Christianity calls Gentiles; he devotes himself to them. He is the apostle of the outer world. He writes to the nations epistles in behalf of God. Listen to him speaking to the Galatians: 'O foolish Galatians! how can ye go back to the yokes to which ye were tied? There are no longer either Jews, or Greeks, or slaves. Do not perform your grand ceremonies ordained by your laws. I declare unto you that all that is nothing. Love one another. It is all-important that man become a new creature. Ye are called to liberty'. On Mars Hill at Athens there were steps hewn in rock,

which may be seen to this day. Upon these steps sat the great judges before whom Orestes had appeared. There Socrates had been judged. Paul went there; and there, at night (the Areopagus sat only at night), he said to those austere men, 'I come to declare unto you the unknown God'. The epistles of Paul to the Gentiles are simple and profound, with the subtlety so marked in its influence over savages. There are in these messages gleams of hallucination; Paul speaks of the celestial beings as if he distinctly saw them. Divided, like John, between life and eternity, it seems as though he had a part of his thought on the earth, and a part in the Unknown; and it would seem, at moments, that one of his verses answers to another from beyond the dark wall of the tomb. This half-possession of death gives him a personal certainty often wholly apart from dogma, and stamps his individual convictions with an emphasis which makes him almost heretical. His humility, resting upon the mystery, is lofty. Peter says: 'The words of Paul may be taken in a bad sense'. Hilarius Diaconus and the Luciferians ascribe their schism to the epistles of Paul. Paul is at heart so anti-monarchical that King James I, very much encouraged by the orthodox University of Oxford, caused the Epistle to the Romans to be burned by the hand of the common hangman. It is true it was accompanied with a commentary by David Pareus. Many of Paul's works are rejected by the Church: they are the finest; and among them his Epistle to the Laodiceans, and above all his Apocalypse, cancelled by the Council of Rome under Gelasius. It would be curious to compare it with the Apocalypse of John. Over the opening that Paul had made to heaven the Church wrote, 'No thoroughfare!' He is a saint none the less; that is his official consolation. Paul has the restlessness of the thinker; text and formulary are little for him; the letter does not suffice: the letter is mere body. Like all men of progress, he speaks

with reserve of the written law; he prefers grace to the law, just as we prefer to it justice. What is grace? It is the inspiration from on high; it is the breath, *flat ubi vult*; it is liberty. Grace is the spirit of the law. This discovery of the spirit of the law belongs to Saint Paul; and what he calls 'grace' from a heavenly point of view, we, from an earthly point of view, call 'right'. Such is Paul. The enlargement of a mind by the in-breaking of light, the beauty of the seizure of a soul by the truth, shine forth in his person. Herein, we insist, lies the virtue of the journey to Damascus. Whoever, henceforward, shall desire such growth as this, must follow the pointing finger of Saint Paul. All those to whom justice shall reveal itself, every blindness desirous of the day, all the cataracts looking to be healed, all searchers after conviction, all the great adventurers after virtue, all servants of the good in quest of the true, must follow this road. The light that they find there shall change nature, for the light is always relative to darkness; it shall increase in intensity; after having been revelation, it shall be rationalism: but it shall ever be the light. Voltaire, like Saint Paul, is on the road to Damascus. The road to Damascus shall be for ever the route of great minds. It shall also be the route of nations. For nations, those vast individualisms, have, like each of us, their crisis and their hour; Paul, after his august fall, arose again, armed against ancient errors with the flashing blade of Christianity; and two thousand years after, France also, struck to earth by the light, arouses herself, holding in hand the flaming sword of Revolution.

11. Another, Dante, has constructed within his own mind the bottomless pit. He has made the epic of the spectres. He rends the earth; in the terrible hole he has made, he puts Satan. Then he pushes the world through Purgatory up to Heaven. Where all else ends, Dante begins. Dante is beyond man; beyond, not without,—a singular proposition, which,

however, has nothing contradictory in it, the soul being a prolongation of man into the indefinite. Dante twists all light and all shadow into a monstrous spiral; it descends, then it ascends. Unexampled architecture! At the threshold is the sacred mist; across the entrance is stretched the corpse of Hope; all that you perceive beyond is night. Somewhere in the darkness is heard the sobbing of the infinite anguish. You lean over this gulf-poem—is it a crater? You hear detonations; the verse shoots out, narrow and livid, as from the sulphurous fissures of a volcanic region; what seems vapour takes on a spectral form, —the ghastly shape speaks; and then you know that the volcano you have glimpsed, is Hell. This is no longer the human environment; you are in the unknown abyss. In this poem the imponderable submits to the laws of the ponderable with which it is mingled, as, in the sudden crash of a building on fire, the smoke, carried down by the ruins, falls and rolls with them, and seems caught under the timber and the stones. Hence strange effects; ideas seem to suffer and to be punished in men. The idea, sufficiently human to suffer expiation, is the phantom, a form of the shadow, impalpable, but not invisible, an appearance in which there remains sufficient reality in order that chastisement may have a hold upon it; sin in the abstract state, but preserving the human countenance. It is not only the wicked who grieves in this apocalypse, it is evil itself; there all possible bad actions are in despair. This spiritualization of penalty gives to the poem a powerful moral bearing. The depth of Hell once sounded, Dante pierces it, and reascends upon the other side of the infinite. In rising, he becomes idealized, and thought drops the body as a robe. From Virgil he passes to Beatrice: his guide to Hell is the poet; his guide to Heaven is poetry. The epic swells into grander proportions as it continues; but man no longer comprehends it. Purgatory and Paradise are not less extraordinary than

Gehenna; but as we ascend we lose our interest. We were somewhat at home in Hell, but are no longer so in Heaven. We cannot recognize our fellows in the angels: perhaps the human eye is not made for such excess of light; and when the poem becomes happy, it becomes tedious. Such is ever the story of the happy. It is well to marry the lovers or to imparadise the souls; but seek the drama elsewhere than there. After all, what matters it to Dante if you no longer follow him? He goes on without you. He stalks alone, this lion. His work is a miracle. What a philosopher is this visionary! what a sage is this madman! Dante lays down the law for Montesquieu; the penal divisions of *L'Esprit des Lois* are copied from the classifications in the Hell of the *Divina Commedia*. What Juvenal does for the Rome of the Cæsars, Dante does for the Rome of the Popes; but Dante is a more terrible judge than Juvenal. Juvenal whips with cutting thongs; Dante scourges with flames. Juvenal condemns; Dante damns. Woe to the living man on whom this traveller fixes the inscrutable glare of his eyes!

12. Another, Rabelais, is the son of Gaul. And who says Gaul, says also Greece, for the Attic salt and the Gallic jest have at bottom the same flavour; and if anything, buildings apart, resembles the Piræus, it is La Rapée [1]. Here is a greater than Aristophanes, for Aristophanes is bad. Rabelais is good, Rabelais would have defended Socrates. In the order of lofty genius, Rabelais chronologically follows Dante; after the stern face, the sneering visage. Rabelais is the formidable mask of ancient comedy detached from the Greek proscenium, from bronze made flesh, henceforth a human living face, remaining enormous, and coming among us to laugh at us and with us. Dante and Rabelais spring from the school of the Franciscan friars, as, later, Voltaire springs from the Jesuits;

[1] La Rapée Bercy is an eastern suburb of Paris, on the Seine. It gives its name to a station on the belt railroad. Tr.

Dante the incarnate sorrow, Rabelais parody, Voltaire irony,—these issue from the Church against the Church. Every genius has his invention or his discovery; Rabelais has made his,—the belly. The serpent is in man, it is the intestine. It tempts, betrays, and punishes. Man, single being as a spirit, and complex as man, has within himself for his earthly mission three centres,—the brain, the heart, the belly; each of these centres is august by one great function which is peculiar to it: the brain has thought, the heart has love, the belly has paternity and maternity. The belly may be tragic. 'Feri ventrem', says Agrippina. Catherine Sforza, threatened with the death of her children, who were hostages, exhibits herself naked to the navel on the battlements of the citadel of Rimini, and says to the enemy, 'With this I can bring forth others'. In one of the epic convulsions of Paris, a woman of the people, standing on a barricade, raised her petticoat, showed the soldiery her naked belly, and cried, 'Kill your mothers!' The soldiers riddled that belly with bullets. The belly has its heroism; but it is from it that flow, in life, corruption,—in art, comedy. The breast, where the heart rests, has for its summit the head; the belly has the phallus. The belly, being the centre of matter, is our gratification and our danger; it contains appetite satiety, and putrefaction. The devotion, the tenderness, which seize us there, are liable to death; egoism replaces them. Easily do the affections become lusts. That the hymn can be used in the service of Bacchus, the strophe deformed into a tippler's catch, is sad. This is the work of the beast which is in man. The belly is essentially this beast; degradation seems to be its law. The ladder of sensual poetry has for its topmost round the Song of Songs, and for its lowest the jingling ballad. The belly god is Silenus; the belly emperor is Vitellius; the belly animal is the pig. One of those horrid Ptolemies was called the Belly (*Physcon*). The belly is to humanity a formid-

able weight ; it breaks at every moment the equilibrium between the soul and the body. It fills history ; it is responsible for nearly all crimes ; it is the matrix of all vices. It is the belly that by voluptuousness makes the sultan, and by drunkenness the czar ; this it is that shows Tarquin to the bed of Lucrece ; this it is that makes the Senate which had awaited Brennus and dazzled Jugurtha, end by deliberating on the sauce of a turbot. It is the belly which counsels the ruined libertine, Cæsar, the passage of the Rubicon. To pass the Rubicon, how well that pays your debts ! To pass the Rubicon, how readily that throws women into your arms ! What good dinners afterward ! And the Roman soldiers enter Rome with the cry, 'Urbani, claudite uxores ; mœchum calvum adducimus '. The appetite debauches the intellect. Voluptuousness replaces will. At starting, as is always the case, there is some nobleness : this is the stage of the revel. There is a distinction between being fuddled and being dead drunk. Then the revel degenerates into guzzling. Where there was a Solomon there is Ramponneau. Man becomes a barrel ; thought is drowned in an inner deluge of cloudy notions ; conscience, submerged, cannot warn the drunken soul. Brutalization is consummated ; it is not even any longer cynical, it is empty and sottish. Diogenes disappears ; there remains but the tub. Beginning with Alcibiades, we end with Trimalchio, and the thing is complete ; nothing is left, neither dignity, nor shame, nor honour, nor virtue, nor wit,—crude animal gratification, thorough impurity. Thought is dissolved in satiety ; carnal gorging absorbs everything ; nothing survives of the grand sovereign creature inhabited by the soul ; the belly (pass the expression) eats the man. Such is the final state of all societies where the ideal is eclipsed. This passes for prosperity, and gets the name of growth. Sometimes even philosophers heedlessly further this degradation by inserting in their doctrines the materialism

which is in men's consciences. This sinking of man to the level of the human beast is a great calamity. Its first-fruit is the turpitude visible at the summit of all professions: the venal judge, the simoniacal priest, the hireling soldier; laws, manners, and beliefs are a dung-heap,—*totus homo fit excrementum.*

In the sixteenth century, all the institutions of the past are in that state. Rabelais gets hold of the situation; he verifies it; he authenticates that belly which is the world. Civilization is, then, but a mass, science is matter, religion is blessed with hams, feudality digests, royalty is obese. What is Henry VIII? A paunch. Rome is a squab-pampered old dame: is it health? is it sickness? It is perhaps obesity, perhaps dropsy. Rabelais, doctor and priest, feels the pulse of the Papacy; he shakes his head, and bursts out laughing. Is it because he has found life? No, it is because he has felt death; the Papacy is, in reality, breathing its last. While Luther reforms, Rabelais jests. Which best attains his end? Rabelais ridicules the monk, the bishop, the Pope; laughter and death-rattle together; fool's bell sounding the tocsin! But look! I thought it was a feast—it is a death-agony; one may be deceived in the nature of the hiccough. Let us laugh all the same: death is at the table; the last drop toasts the last sigh. A death-agony in the merry mood,—it is superb! The large intestine is king; all that old world feasts and bursts; and Rabelais enthrones a dynasty of bellies,—Grangousier, Pantagruel, and Gargantua. Rabelais is the Æschylus of victuals; and this is grand when we think that eating is devouring. There is something of the gulf in the glutton. Eat, then, my masters, and drink, and come to the finale. To live, is a song, of which death is the refrain. Beneath the depraved human race others may dig dreadful dungeons; but in the direction of the subterranean, Rabelais takes you no farther than the wine-cellar. This universe, which Dante put into Hell, Rabelais

confines in a wine-cask; his book is nothing else. The seven circles of Alighieri bound and encompass this extraordinary tun. Look within the monstrous cask, and there you see them again. In Rabelais they are entitled Idleness, Pride, Envy, Avarice, Wrath, Lechery, Gluttony; and it is thus that you suddenly meet again the formidable jester. Where? In church. The seven deadly sins form the text of this parson's sermon. Rabelais is a priest. Castigation, properly understood, begins at home, it is therefore at the clergy that he strikes first. That is what it is to be at home! The Papacy dies of indigestion. Rabelais plays the Papacy a trick,—the trick of a Titan. The Pantagruelian merriment is not less grandiose than the mirth of a Jupiter. Cheek by jowl: the monarchical and priestly jowl eats; the Rabelaisian cheek laughs. Whoever has read Rabelais has for ever before his eyes this stern confrontment: the mask of comedy fixing its stare upon the mask of theocracy.

13. Another, Cervantes, is also a form of epic mockery; for as the writer of these lines said in 1827 [1], there are between the Middle Ages and modern times, after the feudal barbarism, and placed there as it were to make an end of it, two comic Homers,—Rabelais and Cervantes. To epitomize the horrible in a jest is not the least terrible manner of doing it. This is what Rabelais did; it is what Cervantes did: but the raillery of Cervantes has nothing of the broad Rabelaisian grin. It is the fine humour of the noble after the joviality of the parson. Gentlemen, I am the Seignior Don Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra, poet-soldier, and, as a proof, one-armed. No coarse jesting in Cervantes; scarcely a flavour of elegant cynicism. The satirist is fine, acute, polished, delicate, almost gallant, and would even run the risk sometimes of diminishing his power, with all his affected ways, if he had not the deep poetic spirit of the Renascence. That saves his charming grace from becoming prettiness.

[1] Preface to Cromwell.

Like Jean Goujon, like Jean Cousin, like Germain Pilon, like Primatice, Cervantes is not devoid of illusion. Thence come all the unexpected marvels of his imagination. Add to that a wonderful intuition of the inmost processes of the mind and a multiform philosophy which seems to possess a new and complete chart of the human heart. Cervantes sees the inner man. His philosophy blends with the comic and romantic instinct. Hence the unexpected, breaking out at every moment in his characters, in his action, in his style; the unforeseen, magnificent adventure. Personages remaining true to themselves, but facts and ideas whirling around them, with a perpetual renewing of the original idea and a steady current of that wind which brings the lightning-flash: such is the law of great works. Cervantes is militant; he has a thesis, he makes a social book. Such poets are the champions of the intelligence. Where have they learned fighting? On the battle-field itself. Juvenal was a military tribune; Cervantes comes home from Lepanto, as Dante from Campalbino, as Æschylus from Salamis. Afterward, they pass to a new trial: Æschylus goes into exile, Juvenal into exile, Dante into exile, Cervantes into prison. This is just, since they have done you a service. Cervantes, as poet, has the three sovereign gifts,—creation, which produces types and clothes ideas with flesh and bone; invention, which hurls passions against events, kindles in man a flame that outshines the star of destiny, and brings forth the drama; imagination, sun of the brain, which throws light everywhere, giving to its figures the high-relief of life. Observation, which comes by acquisition, and is, therefore, not so much a gift as an accomplishment, is included in creation; were the miser not observed, Harpagon would not be created. In Cervantes, a new-comer, glimpsed in Rabelais, puts in a decided appearance. You have caught sight of him in Panurge, you see him plainly in Sancho Panza. He comes like the Silenus of

Plautus, and he may also say, 'I am the god mounted on an ass.' Wisdom in the beginning, reason by and by: such is the strange history of the human mind. What more replete with wisdom than all the religions? What less reasonable? Morals true, dogmas false. Wisdom exists in Homer and in Job; reason, such as it must needs be to overcome prejudices, that is to say, complete and armed cap-à-pie, will come in only with Voltaire. Common-sense is not wisdom, neither is it reason; it is a little of one and a little of the other, with a dash of egoism. Cervantes makes it bestride ignorance, and, at the same time, completing his profound satire, he mounts heroism upon fatigue. Thus he shows one after the other, one with the other, the two profiles of man, and parodies them, without more pity for the sublime than for the grotesque; the hippogriff becomes Rosinante. Behind the equestrian personage, Cervantes creates and sets in motion the asinine personage. Enthusiasm takes the field, Irony locks step with it. The wonderful feats of Don Quixote, his riding and spurring, his big lance steady in the rest, are judged by the ass,—a connoisseur in windmills. The invention of Cervantes is so masterly that there is, between the human type and the quadruped complement, statuary adhesion; the babbler, like the adventurer, is part of the beast that is proper to him, and you can no more dismount Sancho Panza than Don Quixote. The Ideal is in Cervantes as in Dante; but it is called the Impossible, and is scoffed at. Beatrice is become Dulcinea. To rail at the ideal would be the failing of Cervantes; but this failing is only apparent. Look well, the smile has a tear; in reality, Cervantes sides with Don Quixote, as Molière sides with Alceste. One must learn how to read, especially in the books of the sixteenth century; there is in almost all, on account of the threats hanging over freedom of thought, a secret that must be unlocked, and whose key is often lost. Rabelais has his reserves, Cervantes has an aside.

Machiavelli wears a mask,—more than one, perhaps. At all events, the advent of common-sense is the great fact in Cervantes. Common-sense is not a virtue; it is the eye of self-interest. It would have encouraged Themistocles and dissuaded Aristides; Leonidas has no common-sense, Regulus has no common-sense: but in face of selfish and ferocious monarchies dragging their unhappy peoples into their own private wars, decimating families, making mothers desolate, and driving men to kill each other with all those fine words,—military honour warlike glory, obedience to orders, etc., etc —this Common-Sense is an admirable personage, arising suddenly, and crying out to the human race, 'Take care of your skin!'

14. Another, Shakespeare: what is he? You might almost answer, He is the earth. Lucretius is the sphere, Shakespeare is the globe. There is more and less in the globe than in the sphere. In the sphere there is the All; on the globe there is man. Here the outer, there the inner mystery. Lucretius is being, Shakespeare is existence. Hence the shadow that is in Lucretius; hence the teeming life in Shakespeare. Space— 'the blue', as the Germans say— is certainly not denied to Shakespeare. The earth sees and traverses the heavens; the earth knows them under their two aspects,—darkness and azure, doubt and hope. Life comes and goes in death. All life is a secret, a sort of enigmatical parenthesis between birth and the death-throe, between the opening and the closing eye. The possession of this secret renders Shakespeare restless. Lucretius *is*; Shakespeare *lives*. In Shakespeare the birds sing, the bushes are clothed with green, hearts love, souls suffer, the cloud wanders, it is hot, it is cold, night falls, time passes, forests and multitudes speak, the vast eternal dream hovers over all. Sap and blood, all forms of the multiple reality, actions and ideas, man and humanity, the living and the life, solitudes, cities, religions, diamonds and pearls, dung-hills and charnel-houses,

the ebb and flow of beings, the steps of comers and goers, all, all are on Shakespeare and in Shakespeare; and, this genius being the earth, the dead emerge from it. Certain sinister sides of Shakespeare are haunted by spectres. Shakespeare is a brother of Dante: the one completes the other. Dante incarnates all supernaturalism, Shakespeare all Nature; and as these two regions, Nature and the supernatural, which appear to us so different, are really the same unity, Dante and Shakespeare, however dissimilar, have conterminous boundaries and domains in common: there is something of the human in Alighieri, something of the spectre in Shakespeare. The skull passes from the hands of Dante into the hands of Shakespeare. Ugolino gnaws it, Hamlet questions it; and it exhibits perhaps even a deeper meaning and a loftier teaching in the second than in the first. Shakespeare shakes it and makes stars fall from it. The isle of Prospero, the forest of Ardennes, the heath of Harmuir, the platform of Elsinore, are illuminated, no less than the seven circles of Dante's spiral, by the sombre, reflected light of hypothesis. Doubt, half chimera and half truth, is outlined there as well as here. Shakespeare, as well as Dante, gives us glimpses of the dim horizon of conjecture. In the one as in the other there is the possible, that window of the dream opening upon reality. As for the real, we insist, Shakespeare overflows with it; everywhere the quick flesh. Shakespeare has emotion, instinct, the true voice, the right tone, the whole human multitude with its clamour. His poetry is himself, and at the same time it is you. Like Homer, Shakespeare is elemental. Men of genius, renewers,—that is the name for them,—arise at all the decisive crises of humanity; they epitomize epochs, and complete revolutions. In civilization, Homer indicates the end of Asia and the beginning of Europe; Shakespeare the end of the Middle Ages. Rabelais and Cervantes also mark the close of the Middle Ages; but, being essentially satirists, they give but a partial

view. Shakespeare's mind is a total; like Homer, Shakespeare is a cyclic man. These two intelligences, Homer and Shakespeare, close the two gates of Barbarism,—the ancient gate, and the Gothic. That was their mission—they have fulfilled it; that was their task—they have accomplished it. The third great human crisis is the French Revolution; the third huge gate of barbarism, the monarchical gate, is closing at this moment. The nineteenth century hears it rolling on its hinges. Thence for poetry, for the drama, and for art, arises the present era, equally independent of Shakespeare and of Homer.

CHAPTER III

Homer, Job, Æschylus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Lucretius, Juvenal, Saint John, Saint Paul, Tacitus, Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare,—that is the avenue of the immovable giants of the human mind.

Men of genius form a dynasty: indeed, there is no other. They wear all the crowns, even that of thorns. Each of them represents the sum-total of absolute truth realizable to man.

We repeat it: to choose between these men, to prefer one to the other, to point with the finger to the first among these first, is impossible. All are the Mind. Perhaps, by the strictest measurements,—and yet every objection would be legitimate,—one might mark out as the highest among these summits, Homer, Æschylus, Job, Isaiah, Dante, and Shakespeare.

It is understood that we speak here only from the artistic standpoint; to be still more specific, from the standpoint of literary art.

Two men in this group, Æschylus and Shakespeare, represent especially the drama.

Æschylus, a kind of genius out of his time, worthy to mark either a beginning or an end in humanity, appears not to be placed in his right turn in the series, and, as we have said, seems an elder brother of Homer.

If we remember that Æschylus is nearly submerged by the darkness rising over human memory; if we remember that ninety of his plays have disappeared, that of that sublime hundred there remain no more than seven dramas, which are also seven odes,—we are astounded by what we see of this genius, and almost terrified by what we do not see.

What, then, was Æschylus? What proportions and what forms had he in all this shadow? Æschylus is up to his shoulders in the ashes of ages; his head alone rises above that burial, and, like the colossus of the desert, with his head alone he is as tall as all the neighbouring gods, upright upon their pedestals.

Man passes before the insubmergible wreck. Enough remains for an immense glory. What oblivion has swallowed, adds an unknown element to his grandeur. Buried and eternal, his brow projecting from the sepulchre, Æschylus looks forth upon the generations of men.

CHAPTER IV

To the eyes of the thinker, these men of genius occupy thrones in the ideal kingdom. To the individual works that these men have left us must be added various vast collective works,—the Vedas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Edda, the Nibelungen, the Heldenbuch, the Romancero.

Some of these works are revealed and sacred. They bear the marks of unknown collaboration. The poems of India, in particular, have the ominous fulness of the possible, as imagined by insanity or related in the vision. These works seem to have been composed in common with beings to whom our world is no longer accustomed. Legendary horror covers these epics. 'These books were not composed by man alone', says the inscription of Ash-Nagar. Djinns have alighted upon them, polypteral magi have mused over them; the texts have been interlined by invisible

hands, the demi-gods have been aided by demi-demons the elephant, which India calls the Sage, has been consulted. Thence comes a majesty almost horrible. The great enigmas are in these poems: they are full of mysterious Asia. Their prominent parts have the supernatural and hideous outline of chaos. They form a mass above the horizon, like the Himalayas. The distance of the manners, beliefs, ideas, actions, persons, is extraordinary. One reads these poems with that wondering droop of the head induced by the profound distance between the book and the reader. This Holy Writ of Asia has evidently been still more difficult to reduce and to co-ordinate than our own. It is in every part refractory to unity. In vain have the Brahmins, like our priests, erased and interpolated: Zoroaster is there; Ized Serosch is there. The Eschem of the Mazdæan traditions is discernible under the name of Siva; Manicheism is apparent between Brahma and Booddha. All kinds of traces blend, cross and re-cross each other in these poems. One perceives in them the mysterious footprints of a race of intelligences who have worked at them in the darkness of the centuries. Here is the enormous toe of the giant; there, the claw of the chimera. These poems are the pyramid of a vanished colony of ants.

The Nibelungen, another pyramid of another multitudinous race, has the same greatness. What the divinities did in Asia, the elves have done here. These powerful epic legends, the testaments of ages, tattooings stamped by races on history, have no other unity than the unity of the people itself. The collective and the successive, combining together, are one. *Turba fit mens.* These recitals are clouds, laced by wonderful flashes of light. As to the Romancero, which creates the Cid after Achilles, and the chivalric after the heroic, it is the *Iliad* of several lost Homers. Count Julian, King Roderigo, Cava, Bernardo del Carpio, the bastard Mudarra, Nuño Salido, the Seven Infantes of Lara, the Constable Alvar de Luna,—no

Oriental or Hellenic type surpasses these figures. The horse of Campeador is equal to the dog of Ulysses, Between Priam and Lear you must place Don Arias, the old man of Zamora's tower, sacrificing his seven sons to his duty, and tearing them from his heart one by one. There is grandeur in that. In presence of these sublimities the reader suffers a sort of sun-stroke.

These works are anonymous; and, owing to the great reason of the *homo sum*, while admiring them, while assigning them a place at the summit of art, we prefer the acknowledged works. With equal beauty, the Ramayana touches us less than Shakespeare. The *ego* of a man is more vast and profound even than the *ego* of a people.

However, these composite myriologues, the great testaments of India particularly, expanses of poetry rather than poems, an expression, at once sidereal and bestial, of vanished races, derive from their very deformity an indescribable supernatural air. The multiple *ego* expressed by those myriologues makes them the polypi of poetry, vague and wonderful monstrosities. The strange seams of the antediluvian rough outline are visible there, as in the ichthyosaurus or the pterodactyl. One of these black, many-headed masterpieces throws upon the horizon of art the silhouette of a hydra.

The Greek genius is not deceived by them, and abhors them; Apollo would attack them. Beyond and above all these collective and anonymous productions (the Romancero excepted), there are men to represent the peoples. These men we have just named. They give to nations and periods the human countenance. They are, in art, the incarnations of Greece, of Arabia, of Judæa, of Pagan Rome, of Christian Italy, of Spain, of France, of England. As for Germany,—the matrix, like Asia, of races, hordes, and nations,—she is represented in art by a sublime man, equal, although in a different category, to all those

that we have characterized above. That man is Beethoven. Beethoven is the German soul.

What a shadow is this Germany! She is the India of the West. She contains everything; there is no formation more colossal. In the sacred mist where the German spirit moves, Isidore of Seville places theology; Albertus the Great, scholasticism; Hrabanus Maurus, linguistics; Trithemius, astrology; Ottni, chivalry; Reuchlin, vast curiosity; Tutilo, universality; Stadianus, method; Luther, inquiry; Albrecht Dürer, art; Leibnitz, science; Puffendorf, law; Kant, philosophy; Fichte, metaphysics; Winkelmann, archæology; Herder, æsthetics; the Vossii, —of whom one, Gerard John, was of the Palatinate,— erudition; Euler, the spirit of integration; Humboldt, the spirit of discovery; Niebuhr, history; Gottfried of Strasburg, fable; Hoffmann, dreams; Hegel, doubt; Ancillon, obedience; Werner, fatalism; Schiller, enthusiasm; Goethe, indifference; Arminius, liberty.

Kepler lights this shadow with the stars.

Gerard Groot, the founder of the *Fratres Communis Vitæ*, makes in Germany a first attempt at fraternity, in the fourteenth century. Whatever may have been her infatuation for the indifference of Goethe, do not deem her impersonal; she is a nation, and one of the most generous: for her, Rückert, the military poet, forges the *Geharnischte Sonnette* ('Sonnets in Coat of Mail'), and she shudders when Körner hurls at her the Song of the Sword. She is the German fatherland, the great beloved land, *Teutonia mater*. Galgacus was to the Germans what Caractacus was to the Britons.

Within herself and at home, Germany has everything. She shares Charlemagne with France, and Shakespeare with England; for the Saxon element is mingled with the British element. She has an Olympus, the Valhalla. She must needs have her own style of writing. Ulfilas, bishop of Mœsia, invents

it for her, and the Gothic caligraphy will henceforth form a pendant to the Arabic. The capital letter of a missal rivals the fantastical signature of a caliph. Like China, Germany has invented printing. Her Burgraves (this remark has been already made [1]) are to us what the Titans are to Æschylus. To the temple of Tanfana, destroyed by Germanicus, she caused the cathedral of Cologne to succeed. She is the ancestress of our history, the granddam of our legends. From all parts,—from the Rhine and from the Danube, from the Rauhe Alp, from the ancient *Sylva Gabresa*, from Upper Lorraine and from Lower Lorraine, through the Wigalois and through the Wigamur, through Henry the Fowler, through Samo King of the Vends, through Rothe the chronicler of Thuringia, through Zwinger the chronicler of Alsace, through Gansbein the chronicler of Limburg, through all those ancient popular songsters, Hans Folz, Jean Viol, Muscatblut, through those rhapsodists the Minnesingers,—from all sources the tale, that form of dream, reaches her and enters into her genius. At the same time languages flow from her. From her fissures gush, to the North, the Danish and Swedish; to the West, the Dutch and Flemish. The German passes the Channel and becomes the English. In the intellectual order, the German genius has other frontiers than Germany. A given people may resist Germany and yield to Germanism. The German spirit assimilates to itself the Greeks by Müller, the Servians by Gerhard, the Russians by Goëtre, the Magyars by Mailath. When Kepler, in the presence of Rudolph II, was preparing the Rudolphine Tables, it was with the aid of Tycho Brahe [2]. German affinities extend far. Without any alteration in the local and national autonomies, it is with the great

[1] Preface to the Burgraves 1843.

[2] The Rudolphine Tables, published in 1627, appear to have been prepared long after the death of Tycho, which occurred in 1601. Tr.

Germanic centre that the Scandinavian spirit in Oehlenschläger and the Batavian spirit in Vondel are connected. Poland unites herself to it, with all her glory, from Copernicus to Kosciusko, from Sobieski to Mickiewicz. Germany is the wellspring of nations. They pass out of her like rivers; she receives them as a sea.

The vast murmur of the Hercynian forest seems to be heard throughout Europe. The German nature, profound and subtle, distinct from the European nature but in harmony with it, volatilizes and floats above the nations. The German mind is misty, luminous, dispersed; it is a kind of immense beclouded soul, with stars. Perhaps the highest expression of Germany can be given only by music. Music, by its very want of precision, which in this case is a quality, goes wherever the German soul goes.

If the German spirit had as much density as expansion,—that is to say, as much will as power,—she could, at a given moment, lift up and save the human race. Such as she is, she is sublime.

In poetry she has not said her last word. At this hour the indications are excellent. Since the jubilee of the noble Schiller, particularly, there has been an awakening, and a generous awakening. The great definitive poet of Germany will be necessarily a poet of humanity, of enthusiasm, of liberty. Perchance—and some signs give token of it—we may soon see him arise from the young group of contemporary German writers.

Music (we beg indulgence for the figure) is the vapour of art. It is to poetry what reverie is to thought, what fluid is to liquid, what the ocean of clouds is to the ocean of waves. If another analogy is desired, it is the indefinite of this infinite. The same insufflation impels, sweeps away, transports, and overwhelms it, fills it with agitation and gleams and unutterable sounds, saturates it with electricity, and causes it to give forth sudden discharges of thunder.

Music is the Word of Germany. The German people, so much curbed as a nation, so emancipated as thinkers, sing with a sombre delight. To sing, seems a deliverance from bondage. Music expresses that which cannot be said, and which cannot be suppressed. Therefore is Germany all music, in anticipation of the time when she shall be all freedom. Luther's choral is a kind of Marscillaise. Everywhere are singing-clubs and choral circles. In the fields of Swabian Esslingen, on the banks of the Neckar, comes every year the Festival of Song. The 'Liedermusik', of which Schubert's *Elf-King* is the masterpiece, makes a part of German life. Song is for Germany a breathing: it is by singing that she respires and conspires. The music-note being the syllable of a kind of undefined universal language, Germany's grand communication with the human race is made through harmony,—an admirable prelude to unity. It is by the clouds that the rains which fertilize the earth ascend from the sea; it is by music that ideas emanate from Germany to take possession of the minds of men. Therefore we may say that Germany's greatest poets are her musicians, of which wonderful family Beethoven is the head.

Homer is the great Pelasgian; Æschylus, the great Hellene; Isaiah, the great Hebrew; Juvenal, the great Roman; Dante, the great Italian; Shakespeare, the great Englishman; Beethoven, the great German.

CHAPTER V

THE dethroned 'Good Taste',—that other 'right divine' which for so long a time weighed upon Art, and which had succeeded in suppressing the beautiful for the benefit of the pretty,—the ancient criticism, not altogether dead, like the ancient monarchy, find from their point of view the same fault, exaggeration, in those sovereign men of genius whom we have

enumerated [1]. These men of genius are extravagant. This arises from the infinite element within them; they are, in fact, not circumscribed. They contain something unknown. Every reproach that is addressed to them might be addressed to the Sphinx. People reproach Homer for the carnage which fills his den, the *Iliad*; Æschylus, for his monstrousness; Job, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Saint Paul, for double meanings; Rabelais, for obscene nudity and venomous ambiguity; Cervantes, for insidious laughter; Shakespeare, for his subtlety; Lucretius, Juvenal, Tacitus, for obscurity; John of Patmos and Dante Alighieri, for darkness.

There are other minds, very great, but less great, who can be reproached with none of these faults. Hesiod, Æsop, Sophocles, Euripides, Plato, Thucydides, Anacreon, Theocritus, Titus Livius, Sallust, Cicero, Terence, Virgil, Horace, Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto, La Fontaine, Beaumarchais, Voltaire, have neither exaggeration nor darkness, nor obscurity nor monstrousness. What, then, do they lack? Something the others have; that something is the Unknown, the Infinite.

If Corneille had that 'something', he would be the equal of Æschylus. If Milton had that 'something', he would be the equal of Homer. If Molière had that 'something', he would be the equal of Shakespeare.

It is the misfortune of Corneille that he mutilated and contracted the old native tragedy in obedience to fixed rules. It is the misfortune of Milton that, through Puritan melancholy, he excluded from his

[1] To those unacquainted with the history of French literature during the thirties and forties of this century, this sentence may require explanation. Good taste (*le bon goût*) and the ancient criticism were the legitimate literary monarchs, against whose régime Victor Hugo's career was a continuous insurrection. If 'Bon Goût' is an ex-king, Victor Hugo is his Cromwell or his Brutus. Tr.

work Nature, the great Pan. It is Molière's failing that, in dread of Boileau, he quickly extinguishes the luminous style of the *Étourdi*, that, for fear of the priests, she writes too few scenes like that of the poor man in *Don Juan* [1].

To give no occasion for attack, is a negative perfection. It is fine to be open to attack.

Indeed, penetrate the meaning of those words, placed as masks upon the mysterious qualities of genius, and under obscurity, subtlety, and darkness, you find depth; under exaggeration, imagination; under monstrousness, grandeur.

Therefore in the upper region of poetry and thought there are Homer, Job, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Lucretius, Juvenal, Tacitus, John of Patmos, Paul of Damascus, Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare.

These supreme men of genius do not form a closed series. The author of ALL adds to it a name when the needs of progress require it.

[1] The scene referred to is the second of the third act. TR.

BOOK III

ART AND SCIENCE

CHAPTER I

MANY people in our day, especially stockbrokers, and often attorneys, say and repeat, 'Poetry is passing away'. It is almost as if they said: 'There are no more roses; spring has breathed its last; the sun has lost the habit of rising; you may roam all the fields of earth, and not find a butterfly; there is no more moonlight, and the nightingale sings no more; the lion's roar is no longer heard; the eagle no longer soars; the Alps and the Pyrenees have passed away; there are no more lovely girls and handsome young men; no one ever muses now over a grave; the mother no longer loves her child; heaven is quenched; the human heart is dead'.

Were it permitted us to mingle the fortuitous with the eternal, it would be rather the contrary which would prove true. Never have the faculties of the human mind, deepened and enriched by the mysterious ploughing of revolution, been profounder and loftier.

And wait a little; give time for the realization of that element of social well-being now impending, —gratuitous and compulsory education. How long will it take? A quarter of a century. Imagine the incalculable sum of intellectual development implied in this single expression: 'Every one can read'. The multiplication of readers is the multiplication of loaves. On the day when Christ created that symbol, he caught a glimpse of printing. His miracle is this marvel. Here is a book: with it I will feed five

thousand souls, a hundred thousand souls, a million souls—all humanity. In the action of Christ bringing forth the loaves, there is Gutenberg bringing forth books. One sower heralds the other.

What has the human race been since the beginning of time? A reader. For a long time he has spelled; he spells yet: soon he will read.

This child, six thousand years old, has been at school from the first. Where? In Nature. At the beginning, having no other book, he spelled the universe. He has had his primary instruction from the clouds, from the firmament, from meteors, flowers, animals, forests, seasons, phenomena. The Ionian fisherman studies the wave; the Chaldæan shepherd spells the star. Then came the first books,—a sublime advance. The book is vaster yet than that grand scene, the world; for to the fact it adds the idea. If anything is greater than God seen in the sun, it is God seen in Homer.

The universe without the book, is science becoming rudely outlined; the universe with the book, is the ideal making its appearance. Thence an immediate modification in human affairs; where there had been only force, power is revealed. The application of the ideal to actual facts produces civilization. Poetry written and sung begins its work,—a gloriously effective deduction from the poetry only seen. It is startling to perceive that where science was dreaming, poetry acts. With a touch of the lyre, the thinker dispels ferocity.

We shall return, later on, to this power of the book; we do not insist on it at present: it is clear as light. Many writers then, few readers: such has the world been up to this day. But a change is at hand. Compulsory education is a recruitment of souls for the light. Henceforth all human advancement will be accomplished by swelling the legions of those who read. The diameter of the moral and ideal good corresponds always to the calibre of men's minds. In proportion

to the worth of the brain is the worth of the heart.

The book is the tool of this transformation. What humanity requires, is to be fed with light; such nourishment is found in reading. Thence the importance of the school, everywhere adequate to civilization. The human race is at last on the point of spreading the book wide open. The immense human Bible, composed of all the prophets, of all the poets, of all the philosophers, is about to shine and blaze under the focus of that enormous luminous lens,—compulsory education.

Humanity reading is humanity knowing.

What nonsense, then, it is to cry, 'Poetry is passing away'! We might say, on the contrary, poetry is coming. For who says poetry, says philosophy and light. Now, the reign of the book is beginning; the school is its purveyor. Exalt the reader, you exalt the book. Not, certainly, in intrinsic value,—this remains what it was; but in efficient power: it influences where it had no influence; men's souls become its subjects to good ends. It was only beautiful; it becomes useful

Who would venture to deny this? The circle of readers enlarging, the circle of books read will increase. Now, the desire to read being a train of powder, once lighted it will not stop: and this, combined with the simplification of hand-labour by machinery, and with the increased leisure of man, the body less fatigued leaving the mind freer, vast appetites for thought will spring up in all brains; the insatiable thirst for knowledge and meditation will become more and more the human preoccupation; low places will be deserted for high places,—an ascent natural to every growing intelligence; people will quit *Faublas* to read *The Oresteia*; there they will taste the noble, and, once tasting it, they will never be satiated; men will make the beautiful their food, because the refinement of minds augments in proportion to their force; and a day will come when, the fulness of civilization

making itself manifest, those mountain-tops, Lucretius, Dante, Shakespeare, for ages almost deserted, and visited only by the select few, will be crowded with intelligences seeking their food upon the heights.

CHAPTER II

THERE can be but one law; the unity of law results from the unity of essence: Nature and Art are the two slopes of the same fact. And in principle, saving the restriction which we shall indicate very shortly, the law of one is the law of the other. The angle of reflection equals the angle of incidence. All being equity in the moral order, and equilibrium in the material order, all is equation in the intellectual order. The binomial, that marvel adjustable to everything, is included in poetry no less than in algebra. Nature plus humanity, raised to the second power, give Art. Such is the intellectual binomial. Now, replace this A + B by the number proper to each great artist and each great poet, and you will have, in its multiple physiognomy and in its strict total, each of the creations of the human mind. What more beautiful than the variety of masterpieces resulting from the unity of law? Poetry, like Science, has an abstract root. Science produces from that root masterpieces of metal, wood, fire, or air,—machine, ship, locomotive, aërostat; Poetry causes to grow from it the masterpiece of flesh and blood, *Iliad*, *Song of Songs*, *Romancero*, *Divine Comedy*, *Macbeth*. Nothing so starts and prolongs the thrill felt by the thinker as those mysterious exfoliations of abstraction into reality in the double region (the one positive, the other infinite) of human thought,—a region double, and nevertheless one: the infinite is an exactitude. The profound word 'number' is at the base of man's thought; it is, to our intelligence, elemental; it signifies harmony as well as mathematics. Number reveals itself to Art

by rhythm, which is the beating of the heart of the Infinite. In rhythm, the law of order, God is felt. A verse is numerous, like a crowd; its feet march with the cadenced step of a legion. Without number, no science; without number, no poetry. The strophe, the epic, the drama, the riotous palpitation of man, the bursting forth of love, the irradiation of the imagination, the lightning-cloud of passion, all are lorded over by this mysterious word 'number', even as are geometry and arithmetic. Ajax, Hector, Hecuba, the seven chiefs before Thebes, Œdipus, Ugolino, Messalina, Lear and Priam, Romeo, Desdemona, Richard III, Pantagruel, the Cid, Alceste, all belong to it, as well as conic sections and the differential and integral calculus. It starts from 'two and two make four', and ascends to the region where the lightning sits.

Yet between Art and Science let us note a radical difference. Science is perfectible; Art, not.

Why?

CHAPTER III

Among human things, and inasmuch as it is a human thing, Art is a strange exception.

The beauty of everything here below lies in the power of reaching perfection. Everything is endowed with this property. To increase, to augment, to win strength, to make some gain, some advance, to be worth more to-day than yesterday: this is at once glory and life. The beauty of Art lies in not being susceptible of improvement.

Let us insist on these essential ideas, already touched upon in some preceding pages.

A masterpiece exists once for all. The first poet who arrives, arrives at the summit. You shall ascend after him, as high, not higher. Ah! your name is Dante? Very well; but he who sits yonder is named Homer!

Progress, its goal incessantly changing, its stages constantly renewed, has a shifting horizon. Not so the ideal.

Now, progress is the motive-power of Science; the ideal is the generator of Art.

Thus is explained why perfection is the characteristic of Science, and not of Art.

A *savant* may outshine a *savant;* a poet never throws a poet into the shade.

Art progresses after its own fashion, it shifts its ground, like Science; but its successive creations, containing the unchangeable, abide; while the admirable guesses of Science, which are and can be nothing but combinations of the contingent, obliterate each other.

Science is relative; Art definitive. The masterpiece of to-day will be the masterpiece of to-morrow. Does Shakespeare change anything in Sophocles? Does Molière take anything from Plautus? Even when he borrows Amphitryon, he does not take it from him. Does Figaro blot out Sancho Panza? Does Cordelia suppress Antigone? No. Poets do not climb over each other. The one is not the stepping stone of the other. The poet rises alone without any other lever than himself. He does not tread his equal under foot. The new comers respect their elders. They succeed, they do not replace each other. The beautiful does not drive out the beautiful. Neither wolves nor masterpieces devour each other.

Saint-Simon says (I quote from memory): 'There was through the whole winter but one cry of admiration for M. de Cambray's book; when suddenly appeared M. de Meaux's book, which devoured it.' If Fénelon's book had been Saint-Simon's, the book of Bossuet would not have devoured it.

Shakespeare is not above Dante, Molière is not above Aristophanes, Calderon is not above Euripides; the *Divine Comedy* is not above *Genesis*, the *Romancero*

is not above the *Odyssey*; Sirius is not above Arcturus. Sublimity is equality.

The human mind is the infinite possible. The master-works, immense worlds, are generated within it unceasingly, and abide there forever. No crowding of one against the other; no recoil. The occlusions, when there are any, are but apparent, and quickly cease. The expanse of the boundless admits all creations.

Art, taken as art, and in itself, goes neither forward nor backward. The transformations of poetry are but the undulations of the beautiful, useful to human movement. Human movement is another side of the question, a side that we certainly do not overlook, and that we shall examine further on. Art is not susceptible of intrinsic progress. From Phidias to Rembrandt, there is movement, but not progress. The frescoes of the Sistine Chapel take absolutely nothing from the metopes of the Parthenon. Retrace your steps as far as you like,—from the palace of Versailles to Heidelberg Castle, from Heidelberg Castle to Notre Dame of Paris, from Notre Dame of Paris to the Alhambra, from the Alhambra to St. Sophia, from St. Sophia to the Colosseum, from the Colosseum to the Propylæa, from the Propylæa to the Pyramids; you may go backward in centuries, you do not go backward in art. The Pyramids and the *Iliad* remain in the foreground.

Masterpieces have a level, the same for all, the absolute.

The absolute once reached, all is said. That cannot be excelled. The eye can bear but a certain quantity of dazzling light.

Thence comes the assurance of poets. They lean upon the future with a lofty grace. 'Exegi monumentum', says Horace; and on that occasion he derides bronze. 'Plaudite cives', says Plautus. Corneille, at sixty-five years, wins the love (a tradition in the Escoubleau family) of the very young Marquise

de Contades, by promising to send her name down to posterity:

> Lady, to that future race
> In whose day I'll have some credit,
> You'll be known as fair of face
> But because my verse has said it [1].

In the poet and in the artist there is something of the infinite. It is this ingredient, the infinite, which gives to this kind of genius an irreducible grandeur.

This infinite element in art is independent of progress. It may have, and it certainly has, duties to fulfil toward progress; but it is not dependent upon it. It is dependent upon none of the more perfect processes of the future, upon no transformation of language, upon no death or birth of idioms. It has within itself the incommensurable and the innumerable; it can be subdued by no rivalry; it is as pure, as complete, as sidereal, as divine, in the heart of barbarism as in the heart of civilization. It is the beautiful, having the infinite variety of genius, but always equal to itself, always supreme. Such is the law, scarcely known, of Art.

CHAPTER IV

Science is different. The relative, which governs it, leaves its impression; and these successive stamps of the relative, more and more resembling the real, constitute the changing certainty of man.

In Science, certain things have been masterpieces which are so no more. The hydraulic machine of Marly was a masterpiece.

Science seeks perpetual motion. She has found it: it is Science herself.

[1] Chez cette race nouvelle,
Ou j'aurai quelque crédit,
Vous ne passerez pour belle
Qu'autant que je l'aurai dit.

Science is continually changing in the benefit she confers.

In Science, all tends to stir, to change, to form fresh surfaces. All denies, destroys, creates, replaces all. What was ground yesterday is put into the hopper again to-day. The colossal machine, Science, never rests. It is never satisfied; it is insatiable for improvement, of which the absolute knows nothing. Vaccination is called in question, the lightning-rod is called in question. Jenner may have erred, Franklin may have been mistaken; let us search again. This agitation is noble. Science is restless around man; she has her own reasons. Science plays in progress the part of utility. Let us reverence this superb handmaiden.

Science makes discoveries; Art composes works. Science is an acquirement of man; Science is a ladder: one *savant* mounts above his fellow. Poetry is a soaring flight.

Do you want examples? They abound. Here is one, the first which comes to mind.

Jacob Metzu (scientifically Metius) discovers the telescope by chance, as Newton discovered gravitation, and Christopher Columbus, America. Let us open a parenthesis: there is no chance in the creation of *The Oresteia* or of *Paradise Lost*. A masterpiece is the offspring of will. After Metzu comes Galileo, who improves the discovery of Metzu; then Kepler, who improves on the improvement of Galileo; then Descartes, who, although going somewhat astray in taking a concave glass for eyepiece instead of a convex one, makes fruitful the improvement of Kepler; then the Capuchin Reita, who rectifies the reversing of objects; then Huyghens, who makes a great step by placing the two convex glasses at the focus of the objective; and in less than fifty years, from 1610 to 1659, during the short interval which separates the *Nuncius Sidereus* of Galileo from the *Oculus Eliæ et Enoch* of Father Reita, behold the original inventor,

Metzu, obliterated. And it is constantly the same in science.

Vegetius was count of Constantinople; but that did not prevent his tactics being forgotten,—forgotten like the strategy of Polybius, forgotten like the strategy of Folard. The pig's-head of the phalanx and the pointed order of the legion reappeared for a moment, two hundred years ago, in the wedge of Gustavus Adolphus; but in our days, when there are no more pikemen, as in the fourth century, nor lansquenets, as in the seventeenth, the ponderous triangular attack, which was formerly the basis of all tactics, is replaced by a swarm of zouaves charging with the bayonet. Some day, sooner perhaps than people think, the bayonet charge will itself be superseded by peace,—at first European, by-and-by universal; and then the whole military science will vanish away. For that science, improvement lies in disappearance.

Science goes on unceasingly erasing itself,—fruitful erasures! Who knows now what is the 'Homœomeria' of Anaximenes, which perhaps belongs really to Anaxagoras? Cosmography is notably amended since the time when this same Anaxagoras told Pericles that the sun was almost as large as the Peloponnesus. Many planets, and satellites of planets, have been discovered since the four stars of Medicis. Entomology has made some advance since the time when it was asserted that the scarabee was something of a god and a cousin to the sun—first, on account of the thirty toes on its feet, which correspond to the thirty days of the solar month, secondly, because the scarabee is without a female, like the sun—and the time when Saint Clement of Alexandria, outbidding Plutarch, made the remark that the scarabee, like the sun, passes six months on the earth, and six months under it. Would you verify this? Refer to the *Stromata*, paragraph iv. Scholasticism itself, chimerical as it is, gives up the 'Holy Meadow' of Moschus, laughs at the 'Holy Ladder' of John Climacus, and is ashamed

of the century in which Saint Bernard, adding fuel to the pyre which the Viscounts of Campania wished to put out, called Arnaldo de Brescia 'a man with the dove's head and the scorpion's tail'. The 'Cardinal Virtues' are no longer the law in anthropology. The 'Steyardes' of the great Arnauld are decayed. However uncertain is meteorology, it is far from discussing now, as it did in the second century, whether a rain which saves an army from dying of thirst is due to the Christian prayers of the Melitine legion or to the pagan intervention of Jupiter Pluvius. The astrologer Marcian Posthumus was for Jupiter; Tertullian was for the Melitine legion: no one was for the cloud and the wind. Locomotion, if we go from the antique chariot of Laius to the railway, passing by the *patache*, the track-boat, the *turgotine*, the diligence, and the mail-coach, has indeed made some progress. The time has gone by for the famous journey from Dijon to Paris, lasting a month; and we could not understand to-day the amazement of Henry IV, asking of Joseph Scaliger: 'Is it true, Monsieur l'Escale, that you have been from Paris to Dijon without relieving your bowels?' Micrography is now far beyond Leuwenhoeck, who was himself far beyond Swammerdam. Look at the point at which spermatology and ovology have already arrived, and recall Mariana reproaching Arnaud de Villeneuve (who discovered alcohol and the oil of turpentine) with the strange crime of having attempted human generation in a pumpkin. Grand-Jean de Fouchy, the not over-credulous life-secretary of the Academy of Sciences a hundred years ago, would have shaken his head if any one had told him that from the solar spectrum one would pass to the igneous spectrum, then to the stellar spectrum, and that by aid of the spectrum of flames and of the spectrum of stars would be discovered an entirely new method of grouping the heavenly bodies and what might be called the chemical constellations. Orffyreus, who destroyed his machine rather than allow the

Landgrave of Hesse to see inside it, — Orffyreus, so admired by S'Gravesande, the author of the *Matheseos Universalis Elementa*,—would be laughed at by our mechanicians. A country horse-doctor would not inflict on horses the remedy with which Galen treated the indigestions of Marcus Aurelius. What is the opinion of the eminent specialists of our times, Desmarres at the head of them, respecting the learned discoveries of the seventeenth century by the Bishop of Titiopolis concerning the nasal chambers? The mummies have got on; M. Gannal makes them differently, if not better, than the Taricheutes, the Paraschistes, and the Cholchytes made them in the days of Herodotus,—the first by washing the body, the second by opening it, and the third by embalming. Five hundred years before Jesus Christ, it was perfectly scientific, when a king of Mesopotamia had a daughter possessed of the devil, to send to Thebes for a god to cure her. It is not exactly our way of treating epilepsy. In the same way we have given up expecting the kings of France to cure scrofula.

In 371, under Valens, son of Gratian the rope-maker, the judges summoned to the bar a table accused of sorcery. This table had an accomplice named Hilarius. Hilarius confessed the crime. Ammianus Marcellinus has preserved for us his confession, received by Zosimus, count and fiscal advocate. 'Construximus, magnifici judices, ad cortinæ similitudinem Delphicæ infaustam hanc mensulam quam videtis; movimus tandem'. Hilarius was beheaded. Who was his accuser? A learned geometrician and magician, the same who advised Valens to decapitate all those whose names began with *Theod.* To-day you may call yourself Theodore, and even make a table tip, without the fear of a geometrician causing your head to be cut off.

One would very much astonish Solon the son of Execestidas, Zeno the Stoic, Antipater, Eudoxus, Lysis of Tarentum, Cebes, Menedemus, Plato, Epi-

curus, Aristotle, and Epimenides, if one were to say to Solon that it is not the moon which regulates the year; to Zeno, that it is not proved that the soul is divided into eight parts; to Antipater, that the heaven is not formed of five circles; to Eudoxus, that it is not certain that, between the Egyptians embalming the dead, the Romans burning them, and the Pæonians throwing them into ponds, the Pæonians are those who are right; to Lysis of Tarentum, that it is not correct that the sight is a hot vapour; to Cebes, that it is false that the principle of the elements is the oblong triangle and the isosceles triangle; to Menedemus, that it is not true that, in order to know the secret bad intentions of men, it suffices to stick on one's head an Arcadian hat decorated with the twelve signs of the zodiac; to Plato, that sea-water does not cure all diseases; to Epicurus, that matter is infinitely divisible; to Aristotle, that the fifth element has not an orbicular movement, for the reason that there is no fifth element; to Epimenides, that the plague cannot be infallibly got rid of by letting black and white sheep go at random, and sacrificing to unknown gods in the places where the sheep happen to stop.

If you should try to hint to Pythagoras how improbable it is that he should have been wounded at the siege of Troy—he, Pythagoras—by Menelaus, two hundred and seven years before his birth, he would reply that the fact is incontestable, and that it is proved by the fact that he perfectly recognizes, as having already seen it, the shield of Menelaus suspended under the statue of Apollo at Branchidæ, although entirely rotted away, except the ivory face; that at the siege of Troy his own name was Euphorbus, and that before being Euphorbus he was Æthalidos, son of Mercury, and that after having been Euphorbus he was Hermotimus, then Pyrrhus, fisherman at Delos, then Pythagoras; that it is all evident and clear,—as clear as that he was present the same day

and the same minute at Metapontum and at Crotona, as evident as that by writing with blood on a mirror exposed to the moon one may see in the moon what one wrote on the mirror; and lastly, that he is Pythagoras, living at Metapontum, in the Street of the Muses, the inventor of the multiplication-table and of the square of the hypothenuse, the greatest of mathematicians, the father of exact science; and that as for you, you are an imbecile.

Chrysippus of Tarsus, who lived about the hundred and thirtieth olympiad, forms an era in science. This philosopher (the same who died—actually died—of laughter caused by seeing a donkey eat figs out of a silver basin) had studied everything, gone to the bottom of everything, and had written seven hundred and five volumes, of which three hundred and eleven were of dialectics, without having dedicated a single one to a king,—a fact which astounds Diogenes Laertius. He condensed in his brain all human knowledge. His contemporaries named him 'Light'. Chrysippus signifying 'golden horse', they said that he had got detached from the chariot of the sun. He had taken for device 'TO ME'. He knew innumerable things; among others, these,—the earth is flat; the universe is round and limited; the best food for man is human flesh; the community of wives is the basis of social order; the father ought to espouse his daughter; there is a word which kills the serpent, a word which tames the bear, a word which arrests the flight of eagles, and a word which drives the cattle from the bean-field; by pronouncing from hour to hour the three names of the Egyptian Trinity, *Amon-Mouth-Khons*, Andron of Argos contrived to cross the deserts of Libya without drinking; coffins ought not to be made of cypress wood, the sceptre of Jupiter being made of that wood; Themistoclea, priestess of Delphi, had given birth to children, yet remained a virgin; the just alone having authority to swear, Jupiter very properly receives the name of 'The

Swearer'; the phœnix of Arabia and the moths live in the fire; the earth is carried by the air as by a car; the sun drinks from the ocean, and the moon from the rivers. For these reasons the Athenians raised a statue to him on the Ceramicus, with this inscription: 'To Chrysippus, who knew everything'.

At very nearly the same time Sophocles wrote *Œdipus Rex.*

And Aristotle believed in the story about Andron of Argos, and Plato in the social principle of the community of wives, and Gorgisippus in the earth's being flat, and Epicurus admitted as a fact that the earth was supported by the air, and Hermodamantes that magic words mastered the ox and the eagle and the bear and the serpent, and Echecrates believed in the immaculate maternity of Themistoclea, and Pythagoras in Jupiter's sceptre made of cypress wood, and Posidonius in the ocean affording drink to the sun and the rivers quenching the thirst of the moon, and Pyrrho in the moths living in fire.

Except in this one particular, Pyrrho was a sceptic. He made up for his belief in that by doubting everything else.

Such is the long groping course of Science. Cuvier was mistaken yesterday, Lagrange the day before yesterday; Leibnitz before Lagrange, Gassendi before Leibnitz, Cardan before Gassendi, Cornelius Agrippa before Cardan, Averroës before Agrippa, Plotinus before Averroës, Artemidorus Daldian before Plotinus, Posidonius before Artemidorus, Democritus before Posidonius, Empedocles before Democritus, Carneades before Empedocles, Plato before Carneades, Pherecydes before Plato, Pittacus before Pherecydes, Thales before Pittacus; and before Thales, Zoroaster, and before Zoroaster, Sanchoniathon, and before Sanchoniathon, Hermes: Hermes, which signifies science, as Orpheus signifies art. O wonderful marvel, this mount swarming with dreams which engender the real! O sacred errors, slow, blind, and sainted mothers of truth!

Some *savants*, such as Kepler, Euler, Geoffroy St Hilaire, Arago, have brought into science nothing but light; they are rare.

At times Science is an obstacle to Science; the *savants* give way to scruples, and cavil at study. Pliny is scandalized at Hipparchus; Hipparchus, with the aid of an imperfect astrolabe, tries to count the stars and to name them,—'A deed evil in the sight of God', says Pliny (*Ausus rem Deo improbam*).

To count the stars is to commit a sin toward God. This accusation, started by Pliny against Hipparchus, is continued by the Inquisition against Campanella.

Science is the asymptote of truth; it approaches unceasingly, and never touches. Nevertheless, it has every kind of greatness. It has will, precision, enthusiasm, profound attention, penetration, shrewdness, strength, patience in concatenation, permanent watchfulness of phenomena, the ardour of progress, and even fits of bravery. Witness La Pérouse; witness Pilastre des Rosiers; witness Sir John Franklin; witness Jacquemont; witness Livingstone; witness Mazet; witness, at this very hour, Nadar.

But Science is series. It proceeds by proofs superposed one above the other, whose obscure stratification rises slowly to the level of Truth.

Art has nothing like it. Art is not successive. All Art is *ensemble*.

Let us sum up these few pages.

Hippocrates is outrun, Archimedes is outrun, Aratus is outrun, Avicennus is outrun, Paracelsus is outrun, Nicholas Flamel is outrun, Ambroise Paré is outrun, Vesalius is outrun, Copernicus is outrun, Galileo is outrun, Newton is outrun, Clairaut is outrun, Lavoisier is outrun, Montgolfier is outrun, Laplace is outrun. Pindar is not, Phidias is not.

Pascal the *savant* is outrun; Pascal the writer is not.

We no longer teach the astronomy of Ptolemy, the geography of Strabo, the climatology of Cleostratus, the zoölogy of Pliny, the algebra of Dio-

phantus, the medicine of Tribunus, the surgery of Ronsil, the dialectics of Sphœrus, the myology of Steno, the uranology of Tatius, the stenography of Trithemius, the pisciculture of Sebastien de Médicis, the arithmetic of Stifels, the geometry of Tartaglia, the chronology of Scaliger, the meteorology of Stoffler, the anatomy of Gassendi, the pathology of Fernel, the jurisprudence of Robert Barmne, the agronomy of Quesnay, the hydrography of Bouguer, the navigation of Bourdé de Villehuet, the ballistics of Gribeauval, the veterinary practice of Garsault, the architectonics of Desgodets, the botany of Tournefort, the scholasticism of Abelard, the politics of Plato, the mechanics of Aristotle, the physics of Descartes, the theology of Stillingfleet. We taught yesterday, we teach to-day, we shall teach to-morrow, we shall teach forever, the 'Sing, goddess, the wrath of Achilles'.

Poetry lives a potential life. The sciences may extend its sphere, not increase its power. Homer had but four winds for his tempests; Virgil who has twelve, Dante who has twenty-four, Milton who has thirty-two, do not make their storms grander.

And it is probable that the tempests of Orpheus were as beautiful as those of Homer, although Orpheus had, to raise the waves, but two winds, the 'Phœnicias' and the 'Aparctias'; that is to say, the south wind and the north wind,—often confounded, by the way, with the 'Argestes', the west wind of summer, and the 'Libs', the west wind of winter.

Religions die away, and in dying bequeath a great artist to other religions coming after them. Serpio makes for the Venus Aversative of Athens a vase which the Holy Virgin accepts from Venus, and which serves to-day as a baptismal urn at Notre Dame of Gaëta.

O eternity of Art!

A man, a corpse, a shade from the depths of the past, stretching a hand across the centuries, lays hold of you.

I remember one day of my youth, at Romorantin, in a hut we had there, with its vine-trellis through which the air and light sifted in, that I espied a book upon a shelf, the only book there was in the house,—Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*. My professors of rhetoric had spoken very ill of it,—a circumstance which recommended it to me. I opened the book. It must have been at that moment about noonday. I happened on these powerful and serene verses [1]: 'Religion does not consist in turning unceasingly toward the veiled stone, nor in approaching all the altars, nor in throwing one's self prostrate on the ground, nor in raising the hands before the habitations of gods, nor in deluging the temples with the blood of beasts, nor in heaping vows upon vows; but in beholding all with a peaceful soul.' I stopped in thought; then I began to read again. Some moments afterward I could see nothing, hear nothing; I was immersed in the poet. At the dinner-hour, I made a sign that I was not hungry; and at sunset, when the flocks were returning to their folds, I was still in the same place, reading the wonderful book; and by my side, my white-haired father, indulgent to my prolonged reading, was seated on the door-sill of the low room where his sword hung on a nail, and was gently calling the sheep, which came one after another to eat a little salt in the hollow of his hand.

CHAPTER V

POETRY cannot grow less. Why? Because it cannot grow greater.

Those words, so often used, even by the lettered,

[1] Nec pietas ulla est, velatum sæpe videri
Vertier ad lapidem, atque omnes accedere ad aras,
Nec procumbere humi prostratum, et pandere palmas
Ante deum delubra, neque aras sanguine multo
Spargere quadrupedum, nec votis nectere vota;
Sed mage placata posse omnia mente tueri.

'decadence', 'renascence', show to what an extent the essence of Art is unknown. Superficial intellects, easily becoming pedantic, take for renascence or decadence some effects of juxtaposition, some optical mirage, some event in the history of a language, some ebb and flow of ideas, all the vast movement of creation and thought, the result of which is universal Art. This movement is the very work of the Infinite passing through the human brain.

Phenomena are seen only from the culminating point, and poetry thus viewed is immanent. There is neither rise nor decline in Art. Human genius is always at its full; all the rain of heaven adds not a drop of water to the ocean. A tide is an illusion; water ebbs on one shore, only to rise on another. Oscillations are taken for diminutions. To say 'there will be no more poets', is to say 'there will never be flood-tide again'.

Poetry is elemental. It is irreducible, incorruptible, and refractory to manipulation. Like the sea, it says on each occasion all it has to say; then it begins anew with a tranquil majesty, and with the inexhaustible variety which belongs only to unity. This diversity in what seems monotonous is the marvel of immensity.

Wave upon wave, billow after billow, foam behind foam, movement, and again movement. The Iliad is moving away, the Romancero comes; the Bible sinks, the Koran surges up; after the aquilon Pindar comes the hurricane Dante. Does everlasting poetry repeat itself? No. It is the same, and it is different; the same breath, a different sound.

Do you take the Cid for a plagiarist of Ajax? Do you take Charlemagne for a copyer of Agamemnon? 'There is nothing new under the sun'. 'Your novelty is the repetition of the old', etc. Oh, the strange process of criticism! Then Art is but a series of counterfeits! Thersites has a thief,—Falstaff. Orestes has an ape,—Hamlet. The Hippogriff is the jay of

Pegasus. All these poets! A crew of cheats! They pillage each other, and there's an end. Inspiration is involved with swindling. Cervantes plunders Apuleius, Alceste cheats Timon of Athens. The Smynthian Wood is the Forest of Bondy. Out of whose pocket was Shakespeare seen to draw his hand? Out of the pocket of Æschylus.

No! neither decadence, nor renascence, nor plagiarism, nor repetition, nor imitation. Identity of heart, difference of spirit; that is all. Each great artist, as we have already said, stamps Art anew in his own image. Hamlet is Orestes in the image of Shakespeare; Figaro is Scapin in the image of Beaumarchais; Grangousier is Silenus in the image of Rabelais.

With the new poet everything begins anew, and at the same time nothing is interrupted. Each new genius is an abyss. Nevertheless, tradition exists. Tradition from abyss to abyss, such is—in Art, as in the firmament—the mystery; and men of genius communicate by their effluence, like the stars. What have they in common? Nothing. Everything.

From the pit that is called Ezekiel to the precipice that is called Juvenal, there is no interruption of continuity for the thinker. Lean over this anathema, or over that satire, and the same vertigo is whirling around both. The Apocalypse is reflected from the Polar Sea of Ice, and you have that aurora borealis, the Nibelungen. The Edda replies to the Vedas.

Hence this,—our starting-point, to which we return, —Art is not perfectible.

No possible decline for poetry, nor any possible improvement. We lose our time when we say: *Nescio quid majus nascitur Iliade.* Art is subject neither to diminution nor to enlargement. Art has its seasons, its clouds, its eclipses,—even its stains, which are perhaps splendours; its interpositions of sudden opacity, for which it is not responsible:

but in the end it brings light into the human soul always with the same intensity. It remains the same furnace, emitting the same auroral glow. Homer does not grow cold.

Let us insist, moreover, upon this, inasmuch as the rivalry of intelligences is the life of the beautiful: O poets! the first rank is ever free. Let us remove everything which may disconcert daring minds and break their wings. Art is a species of valour. To deny that men of genius yet to come may be the peers of men of genius of the past, would be to deny the ever-working power of God.

Yes, and often do we return, and shall return again, to this needed encouragement. Stimulation is almost creation. Yes, those men of genius who cannot be surpassed may be equalled.

How?

By being different.

BOOK IV

THE ANCIENT SHAKESPEARE

CHAPTER I

THE ancient Shakespeare is Æschylus. Let us return to Æschylus. He is the grandsire of the stage. This book would be incomplete if Æschylus had not his separate place in it.

A man whom we do not know how to class in his own century, so little does he belong to it, being at the same time so much behind it and so much in advance of it, the Marquis de Mirabeau,—that ugly customer as a philanthropist, but a very rare thinker after all,—had a book-case, at the two corners of which he had caused a dog and a she-goat to be carved, in remembrance of Socrates, who swore by the dog, and of Zeno, who swore by the goat. His library presented this peculiarity: on one side there were Hesiod, Sophocles, Euripides, Plato, Herodotus, Thucydides, Pindar, Theocritus, Anacreon, Theophrastus, Demosthenes, Plutarch, Cicero, Titus Livius, Seneca, Persius, Lucan, Terence, Horace, Ovid, Propertius, Tibullus, Virgil; and underneath could be read, engraved in letters of gold: 'AMO'. On the other side stood Æschylus alone, and underneath this word: 'TIMEO'.

Æschylus in reality is formidable. He cannot be approached without trembling. He has magnitude and mystery. Barbarous, extravagant, emphatic, antithetical, bombastic, absurd,—such is the judgment passed on him by the official rhetoric of the present day. This rhetoric will be changed. Æschylus is one of those men whom superficial criticism scoffs

at or disdains, but whom the true critic approaches with a sort of sacred fear. The fear of genius is the beginning of taste.

In the true critic there is always a poet, be it but in the latent state.

Whoever does not understand Æschylus is irremediably commonplace. Æschylus is the touchstone of the intelligence.

The drama is a strange form of art. Its diameter measures from *The Seven against Thebes* to *The Philosopher Without Knowing it*, and from Brid'oison to Œdipus. Thyestes forms part of it; Turcaret also. If you wish to define it, put into your definition Electra and Marton.

The drama is disconcerting; it baffles the weak. This comes from its ubiquity. The drama has every horizon; you may then imagine its capacity. The drama has been capable of absorbing the epic; and the result is that marvellous literary novelty, which is at the same time a social power,—the romance.

The romance is bronze, an amalgamation of the epic, lyric, and dramatic. *Don Quixote* is iliad, ode, and comedy.

Such is the expansion of which the drama is capable.

The drama is the vastest reservoir of art, spacious enough for both God and Satan: witness Job.

From the standard of absolute art, the characteristic of the epic poem is grandeur; the characteristic of the drama, vastness. The vast differs from the great in this: that it excludes, if it chooses, dimension; that 'it is beyond measure', as the common saying is; and that it can, without losing beauty, lose proportion. It is harmonious like the Milky Way. It is by vastness that the drama begins, four thousand years ago, in Job, whom we have just recalled, and, two thousand five hundred years ago, in Æschylus; it is by vastness that it continues in Shakespeare. What personages does Æschylus take? Volcanoes: one of his lost tragedies is called *Ætna;* then the mountains:

Caucasus with Prometheus; then the sea: the Ocean on its dragon, and the waves, the Oceanides; then the vast Orient: *The Persians;* then the bottomless darkness: *The Eumenides.* Æschylus proves the man by the giant. In Shakespeare the drama approaches nearer to humanity, but remains colossal. Macbeth seems a polar Atrides. You see that the drama reveals Nature, then reveals the soul; and there is no limit to this horizon. The drama is life, and life is everything. The epic poem can be only great; the drama is constrained to be vast.

This vastness pervades Æschylus and Shakespeare throughout.

The vast, in Æschylus, is a will. It is also a temperament. Æschylus invents the buskin, which makes the man taller, and the mask, which increases the voice. His metaphors are enormous. He calls Xerxes 'the man with the dragon eyes'. The sea, which is a plain for so many poets, is for Æschylus 'a forest' (ἄλσος). These magnifying figures, peculiar to the highest poets, and to them only, have the basal truth which springs from imaginative musing. Æschylus excites you to the very brink of convulsion. His tragical effects are like blows struck at the spectators. When the furies of Æschylus make their appearance, pregnant women miscarry. Pollux, the lexicographer, affirms that at the sight of those serpent faces and of those flickering torches, children were seized with fits of epilepsy, of which they died. That is evidently 'going beyond the mark.' Even in the grace of Æschylus, that strange and sovereign grace of which we have spoken, there is something Cyclopean. It is Polyphemus smiling. At times the smile is formidable, and seems to hide an obscure rage. Put, by way of example, these two poets, Homer and Æschylus, in the presence of Helen. Homer is at once conquered, and admires; his admiration is forgiveness. Æschylus is moved, but remains grave. He calls Helen 'fatal flower'; then he adds, 'soul as calm as the tranquil

sea'. One day Shakespeare will say, 'false as the wave' [1].

CHAPTER II

THE theatre is a crucible of civilization. It is a place of human communion. All its phases need to be studied. It is in the theatre that the public soul is formed.

We have just seen what the theatre was in the time of Shakespeare and Molière; shall we see what it was in the time of Æschylus?

Let us go to see this play.

It is no longer the cart of Thespis; it is no longer the scaffold of Susarion; it is no longer the wooden circus of Chœrilus. Athens, forecasting the coming of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, has built theatres of stone. No roof, the sky for a ceiling, the day for lighting, a long platform of stone pierced with doors and staircases and secured to a wall, the actors and the chorus going and coming upon this platform, which is the logeum, and performing the play; in the centre, where in our day is the prompter's box, a small altar to Bacchus, the thymele; in front of the platform a vast hemicycle of stone steps, on which five or six thousand men are sitting pell-mell: such is the laboratory. There it is that the swarming crowd of the Piræus come to turn Athenians; there it is that the multitude becomes the public, in anticipation of the day when the public shall become the people. The multitude is in fact there,—the whole multitude, including the women, the children, and the slaves, and Plato, who knits his brows.

If it is a fête-day, if we are at the Panathenæa, at the Lenæa, or at the great Dionysia, the magistrates form part of the audience; the proedri, the epistati, and the prytanes sit in their place of honour. If the trilogy is to be a tetralogy; if the representation is

[1] *Othello*, V ii l. 134: 'She was false as water'. TR.

to conclude by a piece with satyrs; if the fauns, the ægipans, the mænades, the goat-footed, and the evantes are to come at the end to perform their pranks; if among the comedians (who are almost priests, and are called 'Bacchus's men') is to appear the favourite actor who excels in the two modes of declamation, in paralogy as well as paracatology; if the poet is sufficiently liked by his rivals so that the public may expect to see some celebrated men, Eupolis, Cratinus, or even Aristophanes, figure in the chorus ('Eupolis atque Cratinus Aristophanesque poctæ', as Horace will one day say); if a play with women is performed, even the old *Alcestis* of Thespis,—the whole place is full, there is a crowd. The crowd is already to Æschylus what, later on, as the prologue of *The Bacchides* remarks, it will be to Plautus,—'a swarm of men on seats, coughing, spitting, sneezing, making grimaces and noises with the mouth (*ore concrepario*), touching foreheads, and talking of their affairs': what a crowd is to-day.

Students scrawl with charcoal on the wall—now in token of admiration, now in irony—some well-known verses; for instance, the singular iambic of Phrynichus in a single word

Archaiomelesidonophrunicherata [1]

of which the famous Alexandrine, in two words, of one of our tragic poets of the sixteenth century, was but a poor imitation

Métamorphoserait Nabuchodonosor [2]

There are not only the students to make a row, there are the old men. Trust to the old men of the *Wasps* of Aristophanes for a noise. Two schools are represented,—on one side Thespis, Susarion, Pratinas of Phlius, Epigenes of Sicyon, Theomis, Auleas, Chœrilus, Phrynichus, Minos himself; on

[1] 'Αρκαιομελησιδωνοφρυνικήρατα.

[2] 'He would transmogrify Nebuchadnezzar.' Tr.

the other, young Æschylus. Æschylus is twenty-eight years old. He gives his trilogy of the 'Prometheï',—*Prometheus the Fire-bearer*, *Prometheus Bound*, *Prometheus Delivered*; followed by some piece with satyrs,—*The Argians*, perhaps, of which Macrobius has preserved a fragment for us. The ancient quarrel between youth and old age breaks out,—gray beards against black hair. They discuss, they dispute: the old men are for the old school; the young are for Æschylus. The young defend Æschylus against Thespis, as they will defend Corneille against Garnier.

The old men are indignant. Listen to the Nestors grumbling. What is tragedy? It is the song of the he-goat. Where is the he-goat in this *Prometheus Bound*? Art is in its decline. And they repeat the celebrated objection: *Quid pro Baccho?* (What is there for Bacchus?) Those of severest taste, the purists, do not even accept Thespis, and remind each other that Solon had raised his stick against Thespis, calling him 'liar', for the sole reason that he had detached and isolated in a play an episode in the life of Bacchus,—the story of Pentheus. They hate this innovator, Æschylus. They blame all these inventions, the end of which is to bring about a closer connection between the drama and Nature,—the use of the anapæst for the chorus, of the iambus for the dialogue, and of the trochee for passion,—in the same way that, later on, Shakespeare was blamed for passing from poetry to prose, and the theatre of the nineteenth century for what was termed 'broken verse.' These are indeed unendurable novelties. And then, the flute plays too high, and the tetrachord plays too low; and where is now the ancient sacred division of tragedies into monodies, stasimes, and exodes? Thespis put on the stage but one speaking actor; here is Æschylus putting two. Soon we shall have three. (Sophocles, indeed, was to come.) Where will they stop? These are impieties. And how does this Æschylus dare to call Jupiter 'the prytanis

of the Immortals'? Jupiter was a god, and he is no longer anything but a magistrate. What are we coming to? The thymele, the ancient altar of sacrifice, is now a seat for the corypheus! The chorus ought to limit itself to executing the strophe,—that is to say, the turn to the right; then the antistrophe,—that is to say, the turn to the left; then the epode,—that is to say, repose. But what means the entrance of the chorus in a winged chariot? What is the gadfly that pursues Io? Why does the Ocean come mounted on a dragon? This is show, not poetry. Where is the antique simplicity? This spectacle is puerile. Your Æschylus is but a painter, a decorator, a maker of brawls, a charlatan, a machinist. All for the eyes, nothing for the mind. To the fire with all these pieces, and let us content ourselves with a recitation of the ancient pæans of Tynnichus! Moreover, it is Chœrilus who, by his tetralogy of the Curetes, started the evil. What are the Curetes, if you please? Gods forging metal. Well, then, he had simply to show their five families at work upon the stage, the Dactyli finding the metal, the Cabiri inventing the forge, the Corybantes forging the sword and the ploughshare, the Curetes making the shield, and the Telchines chasing the jewelry. It was sufficiently interesting in that form; but by allowing poets to blend in it the adventure of Plexippus and Toxeus, all is ruined. How can you expect society to resist such excess? It is abominable. Æschylus ought to be summoned before the court, and sentenced to drink hemlock, like that old wretch Socrates. You will see that after all he will only be exiled. Everything is degenerating.

And the young men burst into laughter. They criticize as well, but in another fashion. What an old brute is that Solon! It is he who has instituted the eponymous archonship. What do they want with an archon giving his name to the year? Hoot the eponymous archon who has lately caused a poet

to be elected and crowned by ten generals, instead of by ten men of the people. It is true that one of the generals was Cimon,—an extenuating circumstance in the eyes of some, for Cimon has beaten the Phœnicians; aggravating in the eyes of others, for it is this very Cimon who, in order to get out of prison for debt, sold his sister Elphinia, and his wife into the bargain, to Callias. If Æschylus is a reckless person and deserves to be cited before the Areopagus, has not Phrynichus also been judged and condemned for having shown on the stage, in *The Taking of Miletus*, the Greeks beaten by the Persians? When will poets be allowed to suit their own fancy? Hurrah for the liberty of Pericles, and down with the censure of Solon! And then what is this law that has just been promulgated, by which the chorus is reduced from fifty to fifteen? And how are they to play *The Danaïdes?* and won't there be chuckling at the line of Æschylus,—'Egyptus, the father of fifty sons'? The fifty will be fifteen. These magistrates are idiots. Quarrel, uproar all around. One prefers Phrynichus, another prefers Æschylus, another prefers wine with honey and benzoin. The speaking-trumpets of the actors compete as well as they can with this deafening noise, through which is heard from time to time the shrill cry of the public vendors of phallus and of the water-bearers. Such is the Athenian uproar. During all this time the play is going on. It is the work of a living man. There is good cause for the commotion. Later on, after the death of Æschylus, or after he has been exiled, there will be silence. It is right to be silent before a god. 'Æquum est'—it is Plautus who speaks—'vos deo facere silentum.'

CHAPTER III

A GENIUS is an accused man. As long as Æschylus lived, his life was a strife. His genius was contested, then he was persecuted: a natural progression.

According to Athenian practice, his private life was unveiled; he was traduced, slandered. A woman whom he had loved, Planesia, sister of Chrysilla, mistress of Pericles, has dishonoured herself in the eyes of posterity by the outrages that she publicly inflicted on Æschylus. Unnatural amours were imputed to him; for him, as for Shakespeare, a Lord Southampton was found. His popularity was broken down. Then everything was charged to him as a crime, even his kindness to young poets who respectfully offered to him their first laurels. It is curious to see this reproach constantly reappearing. Pezay and St. Lambert repeat it in the eighteenth century: 'Why, Voltaire, in all thy notes to the authors who address thee with complimentary verses, dost thou reply with excessive praises?' [1]

Æschylus, while alive, was a kind of public target for all haters. Young, the ancient poets, Thespis and Phrynichus, were preferred to him; old, the new ones, Sophocles and Euripides, were placed above him. At last he was brought before the Areopagus, and—according to Suidas, because the theatre had fallen in during the performance of one of his pieces; according to Ælian, because he had blasphemed, or, what is the same thing, had revealed the mysteries of Eleusis—he was exiled. He died in exile.

Then Lycurgus the orator cried: 'We must raise to Æschylus a statue of bronze.'

Athens, which had expelled the man, raised the statue.

Thus Shakespeare, through death, entered into oblivion; Æschylus into glory.

This glory, which was to have in the course of ages its phases, its eclipses, its vanishings, and its returns, was then dazzling. Greece remembered Salamis,

[1] Pourquoi, Voltaire, à ces auteurs
Qui t'adressent des vers flatteurs,
Répondre, en toutes tes missives,
Par des louanges excessives?

where Æschylus had fought. The Areopagus itself was ashamed. It felt that it had been ungrateful toward the man who, in *The Oresteia*, had paid to that tribunal the supreme honour of summoning before it Minerva and Apollo. Æschylus became sacred. All the phratries had his bust, wreathed at first with fillets, afterward crowned with laurels. Aristophanes made him say, in *The Frogs*, 'I am dead, but my poetry liveth.' In the great Eleusinian days, the herald of the Areopagus blew the Tyrrhenian trumpet in honour of Æschylus. An official copy of his ninety-seven dramas was made at the expense of the Republic, and placed under the special care of the recorder of Athens. The actors who played his pieces were obliged to go and collate their parts with this perfect and unique copy. Æschylus was made a second Homer. Æschylus had, like Homer, his rhapsodists, who sang his verses at the festivals, holding in their hands a branch of myrtle.

He had been right, the great and insulted man, to write on his poems this proud and mournful dedication:

To Time.

There was no more said about his blasphemy: it was enough that this blasphemy had caused him to die in exile; it was as though it had never been. Besides, one does not know where to find the blasphemy. Palingenius seeks it in an *Asterope*, which, in our opinion, existed only in imagination. Musgrave seeks it in *The Eumenides*. Musgrave probably was right; for *The Eumenides* being a very religious piece, the priests must have chosen it for the purpose of accusing him of impiety.

Let us note an odd coincidence. The two sons of Æschylus, Euphorion and Bion, are said to have recast *The Oresteia*, exactly as, two thousand three hundred years later, Davenant, Shakespeare's illegitimate son, recast *Macbeth*. But in the face of the universal

respect for Æschylus after his death, such impudent tamperings were impossible; and what is true of Davenant is evidently untrue of Bion and Euphorion.

The renown of Æschylus filled the world of those days. Egypt, feeling with reason that he was a giant and somewhat Egyptian, bestowed on him the name of 'Pimander', signifying 'Superior Intelligence'. In Sicily, whither he had been banished, and where they sacrificed he-goats before his tomb at Gela, he was almost an Olympian. Afterward he was almost a prophet for the Christians, owing to the prediction of Prometheus, which they thought to apply to Jesus.

Strangely enough, it is this very glory which has wrecked his work.

We speak here of the material wreck; for, as we have said, the mighty name of Æschylus survives.

The disappearance of these poems is indeed a drama, and an extraordinary drama. A king has stupidly plundered the human mind.

Let us tell the story of this larceny.

CHAPTER IV

HERE are the facts,—the legend, at least; for at such a distance, and in such a twilight, history is legendary.

There was a king of Egypt named Ptolemy Evergetes, brother-in-law to Antiochus the god.

Let us mention, by the way, that all these people were gods,—gods Soters, gods Evergetes, gods Epiphanes, gods Philometors, gods Philadelphi, gods Philopators. Translation: Gods saviours, gods beneficent, gods illustrious, gods loving their mother, gods loving their brothers, gods loving their father. Cleopatra was goddess Soter. The priests and priestesses of Ptolemy Soter were at Ptolemais. Ptolemy VI was called 'God-love-Mother' (*Philometor*), because he hated his mother Cleopatra; Ptolemy IV was 'God-love-Father' (*Philopator*), because he had poisoned his father; Ptolemy II was 'God-love-

Brothers' (*Philadelphus*), because he had killed his two brothers.

Let us return to Ptolemy Evergetes.

He was the son of the Philadelphus who gave golden crowns to the Roman ambassadors, the same to whom the pseudo-Aristeus wrongly attributes the version of the Septuagint. This Philadelphus had much increased the library of Alexandria, which during his lifetime counted two hundred thousand volumes, and which in the sixth century attained, it is said, the incredible number of seven hundred thousand manuscripts.

This stock of human knowledge, formed under the eyes of Euclid and by the efforts of Callimachus, Diodorus Cronus, Theodorus the Atheist, Philetas, Apollonius, Aratus, the Egyptian priest Manetho, Lycophron, and Theocritus, had for its first librarian, according to some Zenodotus of Ephesus, according to others Demetrius of Phalerum, to whom the Athenians had raised two hundred and sixty statues, which they took one year to construct, and one day to destroy. Now, this library had no copy of Æschylus. One day the Greek Demetrius said to Evergetes, 'Pharaoh has not Æschylus',—exactly as, at a later time, Leidrade, archbishop of Lyons and librarian of Charlemagne, said to Charlemagne, 'The Emperor has not Scæva Memor'.

Ptolemy Evergetes, wishing to complete the work of Philadelphus his father, resolved to give Æschylus to the Alexandrian library. He declared that he would cause a copy to be made. He sent an embassy to borrow from the Athenians the unique and sacred copy, under the care of the recorder of the Republic. Athens, not over-prone to lend, hesitated, and demanded a security. The King of Egypt offered fifteen silver talents. Now, those who wish to comprehend the value of fifteen talents, have but to know that it was three fourths of the annual tribute of ransom paid by Judæa to Egypt, which was twenty

talents, and weighed so heavily on the Jewish people that the high-priest Onias II, founder of the Onian Temple, decided to refuse this tribute at the risk of a war. Athens accepted the security. The fifteen talents were deposited. The complete copy of Æschylus was delivered to the King of Egypt. The King gave up the fifteen talents, and kept the book.

Athens, indignant, had some thought of declaring war against Egypt. To reconquer Æschylus would be as good as reconquering Helen. To repeat the Trojan war, but this time to recover Homer, seemed a fine thing. Yet time was taken for consideration. Ptolemy was powerful. He had forcibly taken back from Asia the two thousand five hundred Egyptian gods formerly carried there by Cambyses because they were in gold and silver. He had, besides, conquered Cilicia and Syria and all the country from the Euphrates to the Tigris. With Athens it was no longer the day when she had improvised a fleet of two hundred ships against Artaxerxes. She left Æschylus a prisoner in Egypt.

A prisoner-god. This time the word 'god' is in its right place. They paid Æschylus unheard-of honours. The King refused, it is said, to allow the works to be transcribed, stupidly bent on possessing a unique copy.

Particular care was taken of this manuscript when the library of Alexandria, augmented by the library of Pergamus, which Antony gave to Cleopatra, was transferred to the temple of Jupiter Serapis. There it was that Saint Jerome came to read, in the Athenian text, the famous passage in the *Prometheus* prophesying Christ: 'Go and tell Jupiter that nothing shall make me name the one who is to dethrone him.'

Other doctors of the Church made, from the same copy, the same verification. For in all times orthodox asseverations have been combined with what have been called the testimonies of polytheism, and great pains have been taken to make pagans say Christian

things. 'Teste David cum Sibylla.' People came to the Alexandrian library, as on a pilgrimage, to examine the *Prometheus*, constant visits which perhaps deceived the Emperor Hadrian, making him write to the Consul Servianus : 'Those who worship Serapis are Christians; those who profess to be bishops of Christ are at the same time devotees of Serapis.'

Under the Roman dominion, the library of Alexandria belonged to the Emperor. Egypt was Cæsar's property. 'Augustus', says Tacitus, 'seposuit Egyptum.' It was not every one who could travel there. Egypt was closed. The Roman knights, and even the senators, could not easily obtain admittance.

It was during this period that the complete copy of Æschylus was exposed to the perusal of Timocharis, Aristarchus, Athenæus, Stobæus, Diodorus of Sicily, Macrobius, Plotinus, Jamblichus, Sopater, Clement of Alexandria, Nepotian of Africa, Valerius Maximus, Justin the Martyr, and even of Ælian, although Ælian left Italy but seldom.

In the seventh century a man entered Alexandria. He was mounted on a camel and seated between two sacks, one full of figs, the other full of corn. These two sacks were, with a wooden platter, all that he possessed. This man never seated himself except on the ground. He drank nothing but water, and ate nothing but bread. He had conquered half Asia and Africa, taken or burned thirty-six thousand towns, villages, fortresses, and castles, destroyed four thousand pagan or Christian temples, built fourteen hundred mosques, conquered Izdeger, King of Persia, and Heraclius, Emperor of the East; and he called himself Omar. He burned the library of Alexandria.

Omar is for that reason celebrated; Louis, called the Great, has not the same celebrity,—an injustice, for he burned the Rupertine library at Heidelberg.

CHAPTER V

Now, is not this incident a complete drama? It might be entitled, 'Æschylus Lost'. Exposition, plot, and *dénouement*. After Evergetes, Omar. The action begins with a robber, and ends with an incendiary.

Evergetes—this is his excuse—robbed from the motive of love. The admiration of a fool has its attendant inconveniences.

As for Omar, he is the fanatic. By the way, we must mention that strange historical rehabilitations have been attempted in our time. We do not speak of Nero, who is the fashion; but an attempt has been made to exonerate Omar, as well as to bring a verdict of "not guilty" for Pius V. Saint Pius V personifies the Inquisition; to canonize him was enough: why declare him innocent? We do not lend ourselves to these attempts at appeal in trials which have received final judgment. We have no taste for rendering such little services to fanaticism, whether it be caliph or pope, whether it burn books or men. Omar has had many advocates. A certain class of historians and biographical critics are easily moved to tears over the sabre: a victim of slander, this poor sabre! Imagine, then, the tenderness that is felt for a scimitar,—the scimitar being the ideal sabre. It is better than brute, it is Turk. Omar, then, has been cleared as far as possible. A first fire in the Bruchion district, where the Alexandrian library stood, was used as an argument to prove how easily such accidents happen. That fire was the fault of Julius Cæsar,—another sabre! Then a second argument was found in a second conflagration, only partial, of the Serapeum, in order to accuse the Christians, the demagogues of those days. If the fire at the Serapeum had destroyed the Alexandrian library in the fourth century, Hypatia would not have been able, in the fifth century, to give in that same library those lessons in philosophy which

caused her to be murdered with broken pieces of earthen pots. Touching Omar, we are willing to believe the Arabs. Abdallatif saw at Alexandria, about 1220, 'a shaft of the pillars supporting a cupola '[1], and said, 'There stood the library that Amroo-Ibn-Al-Aas burned by permission of Omar'. Aboolfaraj, in 1260, relates in precise terms in his *Dynastic History* that by order of Omar they took the books from the library, and with them heated the baths of Alexandria for six months. According to Gibbon, there were were at Alexandria four thousand baths. Ibn-Khaldoon, in his *Historical Prolegomena*, relates another wanton destruction,—the annihilation of the library of the Medes by Saad, Omar's lieutenant. Now, Omar having caused the burning of the Median library in Persia by Saad, was logical in causing the destruction of the Egyptian-Greek library in Egypt by Amroo. His lieutenants have preserved his orders for us: 'If these books contain falsehoods, to the fire with them! If they contain truths, these truths are in the Koran: to the fire with them!' In place of the Koran, put the Bible, Veda, Edda, Zend-Avesta, Toldos-Jeschut, Talmud, Gospel, and you have the imperturbable and universal formula of all fanaticisms. This being said, we do not see any reason to reverse the verdict of history; we award to the Caliph the smoke of the seven hundred thousand volumes of Alexandria, Æschylus included, and we maintain Omar in possession of his conflagration.

Evergetes, through his wish for exclusive possession, treating a library as a seraglio, has robbed us of Æschylus. Imbecile contempt may have the same results as imbecile adoration. Shakespeare came very near meeting the fate of Æschylus. He also has had his conflagration. Shakespeare was so little printed, printing existing so little for him, thanks to the stupid indifference of his immediate posterity, that in 1666

[1] The original reads: 'la colonne des piliers supportant une coupole.' TR.

there was still but one edition of the poet of Stratford-on-Avon (Hemynge and Condell's edition), three hundred copies of which were printed. Shakespeare, with this obscure and pitiful edition awaiting the public in vain, was a sort of poor but proud relative of the glorious poets. These three hundred copies were nearly all stored up in London when the Fire of 1666 broke out. It burned London, and nearly burned Shakespeare. The whole edition of Hemynge and Condell disappeared, with the exception of the forty-eight copies which had been sold in fifty years. Those forty-eight purchasers saved from death the words of Shakespeare [1].

CHAPTER VI

THE disappearance of Æschylus! Extend this catastrophe hypothetically to a few more names, and it seems as though one perceived a vacuum forming in the human mind.

The work of Æschylus was, by its extent, the greatest, certainly, of all antiquity. By the seven plays which remain to us, we may judge what that universe was.

Let us point out what 'Æschylus Lost' imports:

Fourteen trilogies,—'The Promethei', of which *Prometheus Bound* formed a part; *The Seven Chiefs against Thebes*, of which there remains one piece; *The Danaides*, which included *The Suppliants*, written

[1] In addition to Hemynge and Condell's edition (known as the 'First Folio, or Folio of 1623'), there had been, before the year of the Great Fire, two editions,—the 'Second Folio', 1632, and the 'Third Folio', 1663-64. Besides these during the poet's lifetime, and throughout a large part of the seventeenth century, single plays of Shakespeare appeared in quarto form. See Dowden's *Primer*, pp. 30-31. In the last chapter of this useful little book some facts are given which show that Shakespeare was by no means so unknown and unpopular throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as Victor Hugo would persuade us that he was. TR.

in Sicily, and in which the 'Sicilianism' of Æschylus is traceable; *Laïus*, which included *Œdipus*; *Athamas*, which ended with *The Isthmiastes*; *Perseus*, the node of which was *The Phorcydes*; *Ætna*, which had as prologue *The Ætnean Women*; *Iphigenia*, the *dénouement* of which was the tragedy of *The Priestesses*; *The Ethiopid*, the titles of which are nowhere to be found; *Pentheus*, in which were *The Hydrophori* (Water-carriers); *Teucer*, which opened with *The Judgment of Arms*; *Niobe*, which began with *The Nurses* and ended with *The Men of the Train*; a trilogy in honour of Achilles, *The Tragic Iliad*, composed of *The Myrmidons*, *The Nereids*, and *The Phrygians*; one in honour of Bacchus, *The Lycurgia*, composed of *The Edons*, *The Bassarides*, and *The Young Men*.

These fourteen trilogies alone give a total of fifty-six plays, if we consider that nearly all were tetralogies; that is to say, quadruple dramas, and ended with a satyric after-piece. Thus *The Oresteia* had as a satyric after-piece, *Proteus*; and *The Seven Chiefs against Thebes* had *The Sphinx*.

Add to these fifty-six pieces a probable trilogy of *The Labdacides*; add the tragedies of *The Egyptians*, *The Ransom of Hector*, *Memnon*, undoubtedly connected with such trilogies; add all the satyric plays, *Sisyphus the Deserter*, *The Heralds*, *The Lion*, *The Argians*, *Amymone*, *Circe*, *Cercyon*, *Glaucus the Mariner*,—comedies in which was found the mirth of that wild genius.

That is what we have lost.

Evergetes and Omar have robbed us of all this.

It is difficult to fix precisely the total number of pieces written by Æschylus. The statements vary. The anonymous biographer speaks of seventy-five, Suidas of ninety, Jean Desiyons of ninety-seven, Meursius of a hundred. Meursius enumerates more than a hundred titles; but some probably do double service.

Jean Deslyons, doctor of the Sorbonne, lecturer on divinity at Senlis, author of the *Discours ecclésiastique contre le paganisme du Roi boit*[1], published in the seventeenth century a work against laying coffins one above another in cemeteries, in which he took for his authority the twenty-fifth canon of the Council of Auxerre: 'Non licet mortuum super mortuum mitti'. Deslyons, in a note added to that work, which is now very rare, and of which we believe Charles Nodier possessed a copy,—quotes a passage from the great antiquarian numismatist of Venloo, Hubert Goltzius, in which, in reference to embalming, Goltzius mentions *The Egyptians* of Æschylus, and *The Apotheosis of Orpheus*,—a title omitted in the enumeration given by Meursius. Goltzius adds that *The Apotheosis of Orpheus* was recited at the mysteries of the Lycomides[2].

This title, *The Apotheosis of Orpheus*, sets one to thinking. Æschylus speaking of Orpheus, the Titan measuring the hundred-handed, the god intrepreting the god,—what could be nobler, and how one would long to read that work! Dante speaking of Virgil and calling him his master, does not fill up this gap, because Virgil, a noble poet, but without invention, is less than Dante; it is between equals, from genius to genius, from sovereign to sovereign, that such homage is splendid. Æschylus raises to Orpheus a temple of which he might occupy the altar himself: this is grand!

CHAPTER VII

ÆSCHYLUS is disproportionate. There is in him something of India. The wild majesty of his stature recalls those vast poems of the Ganges which stride through Art with the steps of a mammoth, and which have, among the Iliads and the Odysseys, the appear-

[1] 'Ecclesiastical Discourse against the Paganism of the King drinks.' (?)

[2] *Sic* in original.

ance of hippopotami among lions. Æschylus, a thorough Greek, is yet something more than a Greek; he has the Oriental incommensurableness.

Salmasius declares that he is full of Hebraisms and Syrianisms: 'Hebraismis et Syrianismis'. Æschylus makes the Winds bear Jupiter's throne, as the Bible makes the Cherubim bear Jehovah's throne, as the Rig-Veda makes the Marouts bear the throne of Indra. The Winds, the Cherubim, and the Marouts are the same beings, the Breathings. For the rest, Salmasius is right. Plays upon words so frequent in the Phœnician language, abound in Æschylus. He plays, for instance, in reference to Jupiter and Europa, on the Phœnician word *ilpha*, which has the double meaning of 'ship' and 'bull'. He loves that language of Tyre and Sidon, and at times he borrows from it the strange gleams of his style; the metaphor, 'Xerxes with the dragon eyes', seems an inspiration from the Ninevite dialect, in which the word *draka* meant at the same time 'dragon' and 'clear-sighted'. He has Phœnician heresies: his heifer, Io, is rather the cow, Isis; he believes, like the priests of Sidon, that the temple of Delphi was built by Apollo with a paste made of wax and bees'-wings. In his exile in Sicily he goes often to drink religiously at the fountain of Arethusa; and never do the shepherds who watch him hear him mention Arethusa otherwise than by this mysterious name, *Alphaga*,—an Assyrian word signifying 'spring surrounded with willows'.

Æschylus is, in the whole Hellenic literature, the sole example of the Athenian mind with a mixture of Egypt and Asia. These depths were repugnant to the Greek intelligence. Cornith, Epidaurus, Œdepsus, Gythium, Chæroneia, which was to be the birthplace of Plutarch, Thebes, where Pindar's house was, Mantineia, where the glory of Epaminondas shone,—all these golden towns repudiated the Unknown, a glimpse of which was seen like a cloud behind the Caucasus. It seemed as though the sun was Greek. The sun,

used to the Parthenon, was not made to enter the diluvian forests of Grand Tartary, under the thick mould of gigantic endogens, under the lofty ferns of five hundred cubits, where swarmed all the first dreadful models of Nature, and under whose shadows existed unknown, shapeless cities, such as that fabled Anarodgurro, the existence of which was denied until it sent an embassy to Claudius. Gagasmira, Sambulaca, Maliarpha, Barygaza, Caveripatnam, Sochoth-Benoth, Tiglath-Pileser, Tana-Serim, all these almost hideous names affrighted Greece when they came to be reported by the adventurers on their return, first by those with Jason, then by those of Alexander. Æschylus had no such horror. He loved the Caucasus. It was there he had made the acquaintance of Prometheus. One almost feels in reading Æschylus that he had haunted the vast primitive thickets now become coal-measures, and that he had taken huge strides over the roots, snake-like and half-living, of the ancient vegetable monsters. Æschylus is a kind of behemoth among the great intelligences.

Let us say, however, that the affinity of Greece with the East—an affinity hated by the Greeks—was real. The letters of the Greek alphabet are nothing but the letters of the Phœnician alphabet reversed. Æschylus was all the more Greek from the fact of his being something of a Phœnician.

This powerful mind, at times apparently shapeless, on account of its very greatness, has the Titanic gaiety and affability. He indulges in quibbles on the names of Prometheus, Polynices, Helen, Apollo, Ilion, on the cock and the sun,—imitating, in this respect, Homer, who made about the olive that famous pun which caused Diogenes to throw away his plate of olives and eat a tart.

The father of Æschylus, Euphorion, was a disciple of Pythagoras. The soul of Pythagoras, that philosopher half magian and half Brahmin, seemed to have entered through Euphorion into Æschylus. We have

already said that in the dark and mysterious quarrel between the celestial and the terrestrial gods, the intestine war of paganism, Æschylus was terrestrial. He belonged to the faction of the gods of earth. The Cyclops having worked for Jupiter, he rejected them, as we should reject a corporation of workmen who had betrayed us, and he preferred to them the Cabiri. He adored Ceres. 'O thou, Ceres, nurse of my soul!' and Ceres is Demeter,—that is, Ge-meter, the mother-earth. Hence his veneration for Asia. It seemed then as though the Earth was rather in Asia than elsewhere. Asia is in reality, compared with Europe, a kind of block almost without capes and gulfs, and little penetrated by the sea. The Minerva of Æschylus says 'Asia the Great'. 'The sacred soil of Asia', says the chorus of the Oceanides. In his epitaph, graven on his tomb at Gela, and written by himself, Æschylus attests 'the long-haired Mede'[1]. He makes the chorus celebrate 'Susicanes and Pegastagon, born in Egypt, and the chief of Memphis the sacred city'. Like the Phœnicians, he gives the name 'Oncea' to Minerva. In *The Ætna* he celebrates the Sicilian Dioscuri, the Palici, those twin gods whose worship, connected with the local worship of Vulcan, had reached Asia through Sarepta and Tyre. He calls them 'the venerable Palici'. Three of his trilogies are entitled *The Persians*, *The Ethiopid*, *The Egyptians*. In the geography of Æschylus, Egypt, as well as Arabia, was in Asia. Prometheus says, 'the flower of Arabia, the hero of Caucasus'. Æschylus was in geography a notable specialist. He had a Gorgonian city, Cysthenes, which he placed in Asia, as well as a River Pluto, rolling sands of gold, and defended by

[1] The epitaph is translated by John Stuart Blackie as follows:—

Here Æschylus lies, from his Athenian home
Remote, 'neath Gela's wheat-producing loam;
How brave in battle was Euphorion's son,
The long-haired Mede can tell who fell at Marathon. Tr.

men with a single eye,—the Arimaspians. The pirates to whom he makes allusion somewhere are, according to all appearance, the pirates of Angria[1], who inhabited the rock Vizindruk. He could see distinctly beyond the Pas-du-Nil, in the mountains of Byblos, the source of the Nile, still unknown to-day. He knew the precise spot where Prometheus had stolen the fire, and he designated without hesitation Mount Mosychlus, in the neighbourhood of Lemnos.

When this geography ceases to be fanciful, it is exact as an itinerary. It becomes true, and remains incommensurable. There is nothing more real than that splendid transmission, in one night, of the news of the capture of Troy, by bonfires lighted one after the other, and answering from mountain to mountain, —from Mount Ida to the promontory of Hermes, from the promontory of Hermes to Mount Athos, from Mount Athos to Mount Macispe, from Macispe to Messapius, from Mount Messapius over the River Asopus to Mount Cytheron, from Mount Cytheron over the morass of Gorgopis to Mount Egiplanctus, from Mount Egiplanctus to Cape Saronica (later Spireum), from Cape Saronica to Mount Arachne, from Mount Arachne to Argos. You may follow on the map that train of fire announcing Agamemnon to Clytemnestra.

This bewildering geography is mingled with an extraordinary tragedy, in which you hear dialogues more than human: *Prometheus* 'Alas!' *Mercury* 'This is a word that Jupiter speaks not.' And again, where the Ocean plays the part of a Geronte: 'To appear mad' says the Ocean to Prometheus 'is the secret of the sage'—a saying as deep as the sea. Who knows the mental reservations of the tempest? And the Power exclaims: 'There is but one free god —Jupiter.'

Æschylus has his own geography; he has also his fauna.

[1] The original reads: 'les pirates angrias.' Tr.

This fauna, which strikes us as fabulous, is enigmatical rather than chimerical. The author of these lines has discovered and identified, in a glass case of the Japanese Museum at the Hague, the impossible serpent of *The Oresteia*, having two heads at its two extremities. There are, it may be added, in the same case several specimens of a monstrosity which would seem to be of another world, and is, at all events, strange and unexplained,—as, for our part, we are little disposed to admit the odd hypothesis of Japanese manufacturers of monsters.

Æschylus at times sees Nature with simplifications stamped with a mysterious disdain. Here the Pythagorean disappears, and the magian shows himself. All beasts are *the* beast. Æschylus seems to see in the animal kingdom only a dog. The griffin is a 'dumb dog'; the eagle is a 'winged dog',—'the winged dog of Jupiter', says Prometheus.

We have just used the word 'magian'. In fact, this poet, like Job, performs at times the functions of a priest. One would say that he exercises over Nature, over human creatures, and even over gods, a kind of magianism. He upbraids animals for their voracity. A vulture which seizes a doe-hare with young, in spite of its running, and feeds on it, 'eats a whole race stopped in its flight'. He addresses the dust and the smoke: the first he calls 'thirsty sister of mire'; the other, 'black sister of fire'. He insults the dreaded bay of Salmydessus, 'stepmother of ships.' He reduces to dwarfish proportions the Greeks who took Troy by treachery: he exhibits them whelped by a machine of war; he calls them 'these foal of a horse'. As for the gods, he goes so far as to incorporate Apollo with Jupiter. He finely calls Apollo 'the conscience of Jupiter'.

His bold familiarity is absolute,—a mark of sovereignty. He makes the sacrificer take Iphigenia 'as a she-goat.' A queen who is a faithful spouse is for him 'the good house-bitch'. As for Orestes,

he has seen him when a babe, and he speaks of him as 'wetting his swaddling-clothes' (*humectatio ex urina*). He goes even beyond this Latin. The expression, which we do not repeat here, is to be found in *The Litigants*[1]. If you are bent upon reading the word which we hesitate to write, apply to Racine.

The whole is vast and mournful. The profound despair of fate is in Æschylus. He portrays in terrible lines 'the impotence which chains down, as in a dream, the blind living creatures'. His tragedy is nothing but the old Orphic dithyramb suddenly bursting into tears and lamentations over man.

CHAPTER VIII

ARISTOPHANES loved Æschylus by that law of affinity which causes Marivaux to love Racine.

Tragedy and comedy are made to understand one another.

The same distracted and all-powerful breath fills Æschylus and Aristophanes. They are the two inspired wearers of the antique mask.

Aristophanes, who is not yet finally judged, adhered to the Mysteries, to Cecropian poetry, to Eleusis, to Dodona, to the Asiatic twilight, to the profound pensive dream. This dream, whence sprang the art of Ægina, was at the threshold of the Ionian philosophy in Thales as well as at the threshold of the Italic philosophy in Pythagoras. It was the sphinx guarding the entrance.

This sphinx was a muse,—the great pontifical and wanton muse of universal procreation; and Aristophanes loved it. This sphinx breathed tragedy into Æschylus, and comedy into Aristophanes. It contained something of Cybele. The antique sacred immodesty is found in Aristophanes. At times he shows Bacchus foaming at the lips. He comes from

[1] *Les Plaideurs*, act iii scene iii.

the Dionysia, or from the Ascolia [1], or from the great trieterical Orgy, and he strikes one as a raving maniac of the Mysteries. His staggering verse recalls the Bacchant hopping giddily upon air-bladders. Aristophanes has the sacerdotal obscenity. He is for nudity against love. He denounces the Phædras and the Sthenobœas, and he creates 'Lysistrata'.

Let no one fail to note that this was religion, and that a cynic was an austere mind. The Gymnosophists formed the point of intersection between lewdness and thought. The he-goat, with its philosopher's beard, belonged to that sect. That dark, ecstatic, and bestial Oriental spirit lives still in the santon, the dervish, and the fakir. Aristophanes, like Diogenes, belonged to that family. Æschylus was related to it by his Oriental temperament, but he retained the tragic chastity.

This mysterious naturalism was the antique Genius of Greece. It was called poetry and philosophy. It had under it the group of the seven sages, one of whom, Periander, was a tyrant. Now, a certain vulgar spirit of moderation appeared with Socrates; it was sagacity clarifying wisdom. Thales and Pythagoras reduced to immediate truth: such was the operation,—a sort of filtration, which, purifying and weakening, allowed the ancient divine doctrine to percolate, drop by drop, and become human. These simplifications disgust fanaticism; dogmas object to a process of sifting. To ameliorate a religion is to lay violent hands on it. Progress, offering its services to Faith, offends it. Faith is an ignorance which professes to know, and which in certain cases does, perhaps, know more than Science. In the face of the lofty affirmations of believers, Socrates had an uncomfortable, sly half-smile. There is in Socrates something of Voltaire. Socrates denounces all the Eleusinian philosophy as unintelligible and incon-

[1] 'Aschosie' in the original. The translator supposes the 'Ascoliasmus' or 'Ascolia' to be intended. Tr.

ceivable; and he said to Euripides, that to understand Heraclitus and the old philosophers, 'one would have to be a swimmer of Delos',—that is, a swimmer capable of landing on an island which recedes before him. That was impiety and sacrilege toward the ancient Hellenic naturalism. One need seek no other cause for the antipathy of Aristophanes for Socrates.

This antipathy was hideous: the poet has the bearing of a persecutor; he lends assistance to the oppressors against the oppressed, and his comedy is guilty of crimes. Aristophanes—fearful punishment! —has remained in the eyes of posterity in the predicament of an evil genius. But there is for him one extenuating circumstance,—he was an ardent admirer of the poet of Prometheus, and to admire him was to defend him. Aristophanes did what he could to prevent his banishment; and if anything can diminish one's indignation in reading *The Clouds*, with its rabid satire of Socrates, it is to see in the background the hand of Aristophanes detaining by the mantle the departing Æschylus. Æschylus has likewise a comedy, —a sister of the broad farce of Aristophanes. We have spoken of his mirth; it goes very far in *The Argians*. It equals Aristophanes, and outstrips the Shrove Tuesday of our Carnival. Listen: 'He throws at my head a chamber utensil. The full vase falls on my head, and is broken, odoriferous, but not precisely like an urn of perfume.' Who says that? Æschylus. And in his turn Shakespeare will come and exclaim through Falstaff's lips: 'Empty the jorden'. What can you say? You have to deal with savages.

One of these savages is Molière; witness, from one end to the other, *Le Malade Imaginaire*. Racine also is, to some extent, one of them; see *Les Plaideurs*, already mentioned.

The Abbé Camus was a witty bishop,—a rare thing at all times; and, what is more, he was a good man.

He would have deserved this reproach of another bishop, our contemporary, of being 'good to the point of silliness'. Perhaps he was good because he was clever. He gave to the poor all the revenue of his bishopric of Belley. He objected to canonization. It was he who said, 'There's no chase but with old dogs, and no shrine but for old saints'[1]; and although he did not like new-comers in sainthood, he was the friend of Saint François de Sales, by whose advice he wrote romances. He relates in one of his letters that François de Sales had said to him, 'The Church enjoys a laugh'.

Art enjoys a laugh. Art, which is a temple, has its laughter. Whence comes this hilarity? All at once, in the midst of the stern faces of serious masterpieces, there bursts forth a buffoon,—a masterpiece he also. Sancho Panza jostles Agamemnon. All the marvels of thought are there; irony comes to complicate and complete them. Enigma. Behold Art, great Art, seized with a fit of gaiety. Its problem, matter, amuses it. It was forming it, now it deforms it. It was shaping it for beauty, now it delights in extracting from it its ugliness. It seems to forget its responsibility. It does not forget it, however; for suddenly, behind the grimace, there shines the countenance of philosophy,—a smooth-browed philosophy, less sidereal more terrestrial, quite as mysterious as the gloomy philosophy. The unknown man and the unknown in things confront each other; and in the act of meeting, these two augurs, Fate and Nature, fail to keep their faces straight. Poetry burdened with anxieties, befools,—whom? Itself. A mirth, which is not serenity, gushes out from the incomprehensible. An unknown, austere, and sinister raillery flashes its lightning through the human darkness. The shadows piled around us play with our soul.

[1] This saw involves a quaint pun between *chasse* (chase) and *châsse* (shrine). TR.

Formidable blossoming of the Unknown: the jest issuing from the abyss.

This alarming mirth in Art is called, in antiquity, Aristophanes; and in modern times, Rabelais.

When Pratinas the Dorian had invented the play with satyrs,—comedy making its appearance face to face with tragedy, mirth by the side of mourning, the two styles ready, perhaps, to unite,—it was a matter of scandal. Agathon, the friend of Euripides, went to Dodona to consult Loxias. Loxias is Apollo. Loxias means 'crooked', and Apollo was called 'The Crooked', because his oracles were always indirect and full of meanders and coils. Agathon inquired of Apollo whether comedy existed by right as well as tragedy. Loxias answered: 'Poetry has two ears'.

This answer, which Aristotle declares obscure, seems to us very clear. It sums up the entire law of Art. The poet finds himself, in fact, confronted by two problems. The first open to the sunlight: the noisy, tumultuous, stormy, clamorous problem,—problem of the crowded thoroughfare, of all the paths open to the multitudinous tread of human feet; problem of disputing tongues, of feuds, of the passions with their 'Wherefore?' problem of evil, which is the beginning of sorrow, for to be evil is worse than to do it; problem of pain, dolor, tears, cries, groans. The other, the mute problem of the shadow, the vast silence, of unspeakable and dread significance. And poetry has two ears: the one listens to the living, the other to the dead.

CHAPTER IX

The power that Greece had to throw out light is marvellous, even now that we have the example of France. Greece did not colonize without civilizing,—an example that more than one modern nation might follow: to buy and sell is not all.

Tyre bought and sold; Berytus bought and sold; Sidon bought and sold; Sarepta bought and sold. Where are these cities? Athens taught; and she is to this hour one of the capitals of human thought.

The grass is growing on the six steps of the tribune where spoke Demosthenes; the Ceramicus is a ravine half-choked with the marble dust which was once the palace of Cecrops; the Odeon of Herod Atticus, at the foot of the Acropolis, is now but a ruin on which falls, at certain hours, the imperfect shadow of the Parthenon; the temple of Theseus belongs to the swallows; the goats browse on the Pnyx. Still the Greek spirit lives; still Greece is queen; still Greece is goddess. A counting-house passes away: a school remains.

It is curious to remind one's self to-day that twenty-two centuries ago, small towns, isolated and scattered on the outskirts of the known world, possessed, all of them, theatres. In the interest of civilization, Greece began always by the construction of an academy, of a portico, or of a logeum. Whoever could have seen, at almost the same period, rising at a short distance one from the other, in Umbria, the Gallic town of Sens (now Sinigaglia), and, near Vesuvius, the Hellenic city Parthenopea (at present Naples), would have recognized Gaul by the big stone standing all red with blood, and Greece by the theatre.

This civilization by Poetry and Art had such a mighty force that sometimes it subdued even war. The Sicilians, as Plutarch relates in speaking of Nicias, gave liberty to the Greek prisoners who sang the verses of Euripides.

Let us point out some very little known and very singular facts.

The Messenian colony, Zancle, in Sicily; the Corinthian colony, Corcyra, distinct from the Corcyra of the Absyrtides Islands; the Cycladian colony, Cyrene, in Libya; the three Phocæan colonies, Helea in Lucania, Palania in Corcisa, Marseilles in France,—

all had theatres. The gadfly having pursued Io all along the Adriatic Gulf, the Ionian Sea reached as far as the harbour of Venetus, and Tergeste (now Tricste) had a theatre. A theatre at Salpe, in Apulia; a theatre at Squillacium, in Calabria; a theatre at Thernus, in Livadia; a theatre at Lysimachia, founded by Lysimachus, Alexander's lieutenant; a theatre at Scapta-Hyla, where Thucydides had gold mines; a theatre at Byzia, where Theseus had lived; a theatre in Chaonia, at Buthrotum, where those equilibrists from Mount Chimæra performed whom Apuleius admired on the Pœcile; a theatre in Pannonia, at Buda, where the Metanastes were,—that is to say, 'the Transplanted'. Many of these remote colonies were much exposed. In the Isle of Sardinia—which the Greeks named Ichnusa, on account of its resemblance to the sole of the foot—Calaris (now Cagliari) was in some sort under the Punic claw; Cibalis, in Mysia, had to fear the Tribalii; Aspalathon, the Illyrians; Tomis, the future resting-place of Ovid, the Scordiscæ; Miletus, in Anotlia, the Massagetæ; Denia, in Spain, the Cantabrians; Salmydessus, the Molossians; Carsina, the Tauro-Scythians; Gelonus, the Arymphæans of Sarmatia, who lived on acorns; Apollonia, the Hamaxobians prowling in their chariots; Abdera, the birthplace of Democritus, the tattooed Thracians. All these towns by the side of their citadel had a theatre. Why? Because the theatre keeps alive the flame of love for the fatherland. Having the Barbarians at their gates, it was imperative that they should remain Greeks. The national spirit is the strongest of bulwarks.

The Greek drama was profoundly lyrical. It was often less a tragedy than a dithyramb. It had upon occasion strophes as powerful as swords. It rushed helmeted upon the stage; it was an ode armed for battle. We know what a Marseillaise can do.

Many of these theatres were of granite, some of brick. The theatre of Apollonia was of marble. The

theatre of Salmydessus, which could be moved to the Doric place or to the Epiphanian place, was a vast scaffolding rolling on cylinders, after the fashion of those wooden towers which are thrust against the stone towers of besieged towns.

And what poet did they prefer to play at these theatres? Æschylus.

Æschylus was for Greece the autochthonal poet. He was more than Greek, he was Pelasgian. He was born at Eleusis; and not only was he Eleusinian, but Eleusiac [1]—that is to say, a believer. It is the same shade as that between 'English' and 'Anglican'. The Asiatic element, a sublime distortion of his genius, increased the popular respect; for people said that the great Dionysius—that Bacchus common to Occident and Orient—came in dreams to dictate to him his tragedies. You find again here the 'familiar spirit' of Shakespeare.

Æschylus, Eupatrid and Æginetic, struck the Greeks as more Greek than themselves. In those times of mingled code and dogma, to be sacerdatol was a lofty way of being national. Fifty-two of his tragedies had been crowned. On leaving the theatre after the performance of the plays of Æschylus, the men would strike the shields hung at the doors of the temples, crying, 'Fatherland, fatherland!' Let us add that to be hieratic did not hinder him from being demotic. Æschylus loved the people, and the people adored him. There are two sides to greatness: majesty is one, familiarity the other. Æschylus was familiar with the turbulent and generous mob of Athens. He often gave to that mob the noble part in his plays. See in *The Oresteia* how tenderly the chorus, which is the people, receives Cassandra! The Queen maltreats and frightens the slave whom the chorus tries to reassure and soothe. Æschylus had introduced

[1] Victor Hugo's word is 'eleusiaque.' Neither the word nor the distinction is to be found in the ordinary books of reference. TR.

the people in his grandest works,—in *Pentheus*, by the tragedy of *The Wool-carders*; in *Niobe*, by the tragedy of *The Nurses*; in *Athamas*, by the tragedy of *The Net-drawers*; in *Iphigenia*, by the tragedy of *The Bed-makers*. It was on the side of the people that he turned the balance in the mysterious drama *The Weighing of Souls* [1]. Therefore had he been chosen to preserve the sacred fire.

In all the Greek colonies they played *The Oresteia* and *The Persians*. Æschylus being present, the fatherland was no longer absent. These almost religious representations were ordered by the magistrates. It was as if to the gigantic Æschylean theatre the task had been entrusted of watching over the infancy of the colonies. It threw around them the Greek spirit, it protected them from the influence of bad neighbours and from all temptations of being led astray. It preserved them from contact with Barbarism, it maintained them within the Hellenic circle. It was there as a warning. All those young offspring of Greece were, so to speak, placed under the care of Æschylus.

In India they often give the children into the charge of elephants. These mountains of goodness watch over the little ones. The whole group of flaxen heads sing, laugh, and play under the shade of the trees. The dwelling is at some distance. The mother is not with them, she is at home; busy with her domestic cares, she gives no heed to her children. Yet, merry as they are, they are in danger. These beautiful trees are treacherous; they hide beneath their thickets thorns, claws and teeth. There the cactus bristles, the lynx roams, the viper crawls. The children must not wander away; beyond a certain limit they would be lost. Nevertheless, they run about, call to each other, pull and entice one another away, some of them just beginning to stammer, and quite unsteady on their

[1] The Psychostasia.

feet. At times one of them ventures too far. Then a formidable trunk is stretched out, seizes the little one, and gently leads him home.

CHAPTER X

Some copies, more or less complete, of Æschylus were at one time in existence.

Besides the small copies in the colonies, which were limited to a small number of pieces, it is certain that partial copies of the original at Athens were made by the Alexandrian critics and scholiasts, who have left us some fragments; among others, the comic fragment of *The Argians*, the Bacchic fragment of *The Edons*, the lines cited by Stobæus, and even the probably apocryphal verses given by Justin the Martyr.

These copies, buried, but perhaps not destroyed, have buoyed up the persistent hope of searchers, —notably of Le Clerc, who published in Holland, in 1709, the discovered fragments of Menander. Pierre Pelhestre of Rouen, the man who had read everything (for which the worthy Archbishop Péréfixe scolded him), affirmed that the greater part of the poems of Æschylus would be found in the libraries of the monastries of Mount Athos, just as the five books of *The Annals* of Tacitus had been discovered in the convent of Corwey in Germany, and *The Institutes* of Quintilian in an old tower of the abbey of St. Gall.

A tradition, not undisputed, would have it that Evergetes II returned to Athens, not the original draft of Æschylus, but a copy, leaving the fifteen talents as compensation.

Independently of the story about Evergetes and Omar which we have related, and which, while true in substance, is perhaps legendary in more than one particular, the loss of so many fine works of antiquity is but too well explained by the small number of copies. Egypt, in particular, transcribed everything on papyrus. Papyrus, being very dear, became very rare. People

were reduced to the necessity of writing on pottery. To break a vase was to destroy a book. About the time when Jesus Christ was painted on the walls at Rome with ass's hoofs and this inscription, 'The God of the Christians, hoof of an ass' (namely, in the third century), to make ten manuscripts of Tacitus yearly,—or, as we should say to-day, to strike off ten copies of his works—a Cæsar must needs call himself Tacitus, and believe Tacitus to have been his uncle. And yet Tacitus is nearly lost. Of the twenty-eight years of his *History of the Cæsars*, extending from the year 69 to the year 96, we have but one complete year, 69, and a fragment of the year 70. Evergetes prohibited the exportation of papyrus, which prohibition caused parchment to be invented. The price of papyrus was so high that Firmius the Cyclops, manufacturer of papyrus about the year 270, made by his trade enough money to raise armies, wage war against Aurelian, and declare himself emperor.

Gutenberg is a redeemer. These submersions of the works of the mind, inevitable before the invention of printing, are now impossible. Printing is the discovery of the inexhaustible; it is perpetual motion found in social science. From time to time a despot seeks to stop or to slacken it, and he is worn away by the friction. Thought no more to be shackled, progress no more to be impeded, the book imperishable,—such is the result of printing. Before printing, civilization was subject to losses of substance. The indications essential to progress, derived from such a philosopher or such a poet, were all at once missing. A page was suddenly torn from the human book. To disinherit humanity of all the great bequests of genius, the stupidity of a copyist or the caprice of a tyrant sufficed. No such danger exists in the present day. Henceforth the undistrainable reigns. No one could serve a writ upon thought and take up its body. The manuscript was the body of the masterpiece; the manuscript was perishable, and carried off the

soul—the work. The work, made a printed sheet, is delivered. It is now only a soul. Kill now this immortal! Thanks to Gutenberg, the copy is no longer exhaustible. Every copy is a germ, and has in itself its own possible regeneration in thousands of editions; the unit is pregnant with the innumerable. This miracle has rescued universal intelligence. Gutenberg in the fifteenth century emerges from the awful obscurity, bringing out of the darkness that ransomed captive, the human mind. Gutenberg is for ever the auxiliary of life; he is the permanent fellow-workman in the great task of civilization. Nothing is done without him. He has marked the transition from man enslaved to man free. Try to deprive civilization of him, and you have Egypt. The simple diminution of the freedom of the press is enough to diminish the stature of a people.

One of the great features in this deliverance of man by printing is—let us insist on it—the indefinite preservation of poets and philosophers. Gutenberg is a second father of the creations of the mind. Before him—yes, it *was* possible for a masterpiece to die.

A mournful thing to say: Greece and Rome have left vast ruins of books. A whole *façade* of the human mind half crumbled: such is antiquity. Here the ruin of an epic, there a tragedy dismantled; great verses effaced, buried, and disfigured, pediments of ideas almost entirely fallen, geniuses truncated like columns, palaces of thought without ceiling and door, bleached bones of poems, a death's-head which was once a strophe, immortality in rubbish! These things inspire bodeful dreams. Oblivion, a black spider, hangs its web between the drama of Æschylus and the history of Tacitus.

Where is Æschylus? In scraps everywhere. Æschylus is scattered about in twenty texts. His ruins must be sought in innumerable places. Athenæus gives the dedication 'To Time', Macrobius the fragment of *Ætna* and the homage to the Palici,

Pausanias the epitaph; the biographer is anonymous; Goltzius and Meursius give the titles of the lost pieces.

We know from Cicero, in the *Disputationes Tusculanæ*, that Æschylus was a Pythagorean; from Herodotus that he fought bravely at Marathon; from Diodorus of Sicily that his brother Amynias behaved valiantly at Platæa; from Justin that his brother Cynegyrus was heroic at Salamis. We know by the didascalies that *The Persians* was represented under the archon Meno, *The Seven Chiefs against Thebes* under the archon Theagenides, and *The Oresteia* under the archon Philocles; we know from Aristotle that Æschylus was the first to venture to make two personages speak at once on the stage; from Plato that the slaves were present at his plays; from Horace that he invented the mask and the buskin; from Pollux that pregnant women miscarried at the appearance of his Furies; from Philostratus that he abridged the monodies; from Suidas that his theatre fell in under the weight of the crowd: from Ælian that he committed blasphemy; from Plutarch that he was exiled; from Valerius Maximus that an eagle killed him by letting a tortoise fall on his head; from Quintilian that his plays were recast; from Fabricius that his sons are accused of the crime of leze-paternity; from the Arundel marbles the date of his birth, the date of his death, and his age, sixty-nine years.

Now, take away from the drama the Orient and replace it by the North, take away Greece and put in England, take away India and put Germany (that other immense mother, Alemannia, All-men), take away Pericles and put in Elizabeth, take away the Parthenon and put in the Tower of London, take away the *plebs* and put in the mob, take away fatality and put in melancholy, take away the Gorgon and put in the witch, take away the eagle and put in the cloud, take away the sun and light the wind-swept heath with a ghastly moonrise,—and you have Shakespeare.

Given the dynasty of men of genius, the originality

of each being absolutely reserved, the poet of the Carlovingian formation being the natural successor of the poet of the Jupiterian formation, the Gothic mist succeeding the antique mystery,—and Shakespeare is Æschylus II.

There remains the right of the French Revolution, creator of the third world, to be represented in Art. Art is an immense gaping chasm, ready to receive all that is within possibility.

BOOK V

SOULS

CHAPTER I

THE production of souls is the secret of the unfathomable depth. The innate, what a shadow! What is that concentration of the unknown which takes place in the darkness; and whence abruptly breaks the light of genius? What is the law of such advents, O Love? The human heart does its work, on earth, and by that the great deep is moved. What is that incomprehensible meeting of material sublimation and moral sublimation in the atom, indivisible from the point of view of life, incorruptible from the point of view of death? The atom,—what a marvel! No dimension, no extent, nor height, nor breadth, nor thickness, independent of every possible measurement; and yet, everything in this nothing! For algebra a geometrical point, for philosophy a soul. As a geometrical point, the basis of science; as a soul, the basis of faith. Such is the atom. Two urns, the sexes, imbibe life from the infinite, and the spilling of one into the other produces the being. This is the norm for all, for the animal as well as for man. But the man more than man, whence comes he?

The supreme intelligence, which here below is the great man, what is the power which evokes it, incarnates it, and reduces it to a human state? What part do flesh and blood take in this miracle? Why do certain terrestrial sparks seek certain celestial molecules? Where do they plunge, those sparks? Whither do they go? How do they proceed? What

is this faculty of man to set fire to the unknown? This mine, the infinite, this product, a genius,—what more formidable? Whence does it issue? Why, at a given moment, this one, and not that one! Here, as everywhere, the incalculable law of affinities appears but to escape our ken. One gets a glimpse, but sees not. O forgeman of the gulf! where art thou?

Qualities the most diverse, the most complex, the most opposed in appearance, enter into the composition of souls. Contraries are not mutually exclusive; far from that, they complete each other. Such a prophet contains a scholiast; such a magian is a philologian. Inspiration knows its own trade. Every poet is a critic: witness the excellent piece of theatrical criticism that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Hamlet. A visionary mind may also be precise, like Dante, who writes a book on rhetoric, and a grammar. A precise mind may be also visionary, like Newton, who comments on the Apocalypse; like Leibnitz, who demonstrates, *nova inventa logica*, the Holy Trinity. Dante knows the distinctions between the three sorts of words, *parola piana*, *parola sdrucciola*, *parola tronca*: he knows that the *piana* gives a trochee, the *sdrucciola* a dactyl, and the *tronca* an iamb. Newton is perfectly sure that the Pope is the Antichrist. Dante combines and calculates; Newton dreams.

There is no tangible law in this obscurity. No system is possible. The currents of adhesion and of cohesion cross each other at random. At times one imagines that one detects the phenomenon of the transmission of the idea; one seems distinctly to see a hand taking the torch from him who is departing, and passing it on to him who arrives. 1642, for example, is a strange year. Galileo dies, Newton is born in that year. Very good, it is a clue; but try to tie it, it breaks at once. Here is a disappearance: on the 23rd of April, 1616, on the same day, almost at the same minute, Shakespeare and Cervantes die. Why are these two flames extinguished at the same

moment? No apparent logic. A whirlwind in the night.

Questions unanswered at every turn: why does Commodus issue from Marcus Aurelius?

These problems beset in the desert Jerome, that man of the caves, that Isaiah of the New Testament. He interrupted his preoccupation with eternity and his attention to the trumpet of the archangel, in order to meditate on the soul of some Pagan in whom he felt interested; he calculated the age of Persius, connecting that research with some obscure chance of possible salvation for that poet, dear to the Cenobite on account of his austerity. And nothing is so surprising as to see this wild thinker, half naked on his straw like Job, dispute on this question, apparently so frivolous, of the birth of a man, with Rufinus and Theophilus of Alexandria,—Rufinus observing to him that he is mistaken in his calculations, and that Persius having been born in December, under the consulship of Publius and Marius Asinius Gallus, these periods do not correspond rigorously with the year II of the two hundred and third olympiad and the year II of the two hundred and tenth, the dates fixed by Jerome. It is thus that the mystery invites contemplation.

These calculations, almost wild, of Jerome or others like him, are made by more than one dreamer. Never to find a stop, to pass from one spiral to another like Archimedes, and from one zone to another like Alighieri, to fall fluttering down the circular shaft,—this is the eternal lot of the dreamer. He strikes against the hard wall on which the pale ray glides. Sometimes certainty comes to him as an obstacle, and sometimes clearness as a fear. He keeps on his way. He is the bird beneath the vault. It is frightful; but no matter, the dreamer goes on.

To muse is to think here and there, *passim*. What means the birth of Euripides during the battle of Salamis, where Sophocles, a youth, prays, and where Æschylus, a mature man, fights? What means the

birth of Alexander the night which saw the burning of the temple of Ephesus? What tie exists between that temple and that man? Is it the conquering and radiant spirit of Europe, which, perishing in the form of the masterwork, reappears in the form of the hero? For it must not be forgotten that Ctesiphon is the Greek architect of the temple of Ephesus. We mentioned just now the simultaneous disappearance of Shakespeare and Cervantes. Here is another case not less surprising. The day Diogenes dies at Corinth, Alexander dies at Babylon. These two cynics—the one of the tub, the other of the sword—depart together; and Diogenes, eager to bathe in the radiance of the vast unknown, will again say to Alexander, 'Stand out of my sunlight'.

What is the meaning of certain harmonies in the myths represented by divine men? What is that analogy between Hercules and Jesus which struck the Fathers of the Church, which shocked Sorel but edified Duperron, and which makes Alcides a kind of material mirror of Christ? Was there not a community of soul and an unconscious communication between the Greek legislator and the Hebrew legislator, who (neither of them knowing the other, or even suspecting his existence) created at the same moment, the first the Areopagus, the second the Sanhedrim? Strange resemblance between the jubilee of Moses and the jubilee of Lycurgus! What are these double paternities,—paternity of the body, paternity of the soul, like that of David for Solomon? Giddy heights, steeps, precipices.

He who looks too long into this sacred horror feels immensity unsettling his brain. What does the sounding-line give you when thrown into that mystery? What do you see? Conjectures waver, doctrines shudder, hypotheses float; all human philosophy shivers in the mournful blast rising from that chasm.

The expanse of the possible is in some sort under your eyes. The dream that you have within your-

self, you discover beyond yourself. All is indistinct. Confused white shadows are moving. Are they souls? In the deeps of space there are passings of vague archangels: will they one day be men? Grasping your head between your hands, you strive to see and to know. You are at the window opening into the unknown. On all sides the deep layers of effects and causes, heaped one behind the other, wrap you with mist. The man who meditates not, lives in blindness; the man who meditates, lives in darkness. The choice between darkness and darkness, —that is all we have. In that darkness, which thus far is nearly all our science, experience gropes, observation lies in wait, supposition wanders about. If you gaze into it very often, you become the *vates*. Protracted religious meditation takes possession of you.

Every man has within him his Patmos. He is free to go, or not to go, out upon that frightful promontory of thought from which one perceives the shadow. If he goes not, he remains in the common life, with the common conscience, with the common virtue, with the common faith, or with the common doubt; and it is well. For inward peace it is evidently the best. If he goes out upon those heights, he is taken captive. The profound waves of the marvellous have appeared to him. No one views with impunity that ocean. Henceforth he will be the thinker, dilated, enlarged, but floating; that is to say, the dreamer. He will partake of the poet and of the prophet. Henceforth a certain portion of him belongs to the shadow. An element of the boundless enters into his life, into his conscience, into his virtue, into his philosophy. Having a different measure from other men, he becomes extraordinary in their eyes. He has duties which they have not. He lives in a sort of diffused prayer, and, strange indeed, attaches himself to an indeterminate certainty which he calls God. He distinguishes in that twilight enough

of the anterior life and enough of the ulterior life to seize these two ends of the dark thread, and with them to bind his soul to life. Who has drunk will drink, who has dreamed will dream. He will not give up that alluring abyss, that sounding of the fathomless, that indifference for the world and for this life, that entrance into the forbidden, that effort to handle the impalpable and to see the invisible: he returns to it, he leans and bends over it, he takes one step forward, then two; and thus it is that one penetrates into the impenetrable, and thus it is that one finds the boundless release of infinite meditation.

He who descends there is a Kant; he who falls there is a Swedenborg.

To preserve the freedom of the will in that expansion, is to be great. But, however great one may be, the problems cannot be solved. One may ply the fathomless with questions: nothing more. As for the answers, they are there, but veiled by the shadow. The colossal lineaments of truth seem at times to appear for a moment; then they fade away, and are lost in the absolute. Of all these questions, that among them all which besets the intellect, that among them all which weighs upon the heart, is the question of the soul.

Does the soul exist?—question the first. The persistence of self is the longing of man. Without the persistent self, all creation is for him but an immense *cui bono?* Listen, therefore, to the tremendous affirmation which bursts forth from all consciences. The whole sum of God that there is on the earth, within all men, concentrates itself in a single cry to affirm the soul. And then, question the second: Are there great souls?

It seems impossible to doubt it. Why not great minds in humanity, as well as great trees in the forest, as well as great peaks at the horizon? We behold great souls as we behold great mountains: hence they exist. But here the interrogation presses, it

becomes anxious: whence come they? What are they? Who are they? Are these atoms more divine than others? This atom, for instance, which shall be endowed with irradiation here below, this one which shall be Thales, this one Æschylus, this one Plato, this one Ezekiel, this one Maccabæus, this one Apollonius of Tyana, this one Tertullian, this one Epictetus, this one Marcus Aurelius, this one Nestorius, this one Pelagius, this one Gama, this one Copernicus, this one John Huss, this one Descartes, this one Vincent de Paul, this one Piranesi, this one Washington, this one Beethoven, this one Garibaldi, this one John Brown,—all these atoms, souls having a sublime function among men, have they seen other worlds, and do they bring to earth the essence of those worlds? The master-souls, the guiding intelligences,—who sends them? who determines their advent? who is judge of the actual want of humanity? who chooses the souls? who musters the atoms? who ordains the departures? who premeditates the arrivals? Does the link-atom, the atom universal, the atom binder of worlds, exist? Is not that the great soul?

To complete one universe by the other; to pour upon the insufficiency of the one the excess of the other; to increase here liberty, there science, there the ideal; to communicate to inferiors patterns of superior beauty; to effect an exchange of effluences; to bring the central fire to the planet; to harmonize the various worlds of the same system; to urge forward those which lag behind; to mingle the creations,—does not that mysterious function exist?

Is it not unwittingly fulfilled by certain chosen spirits who, during the moments of their earthly pilgrimage, are in part unknown to themselves? Is it not the function of such or such an atom, a divine motive power called soul, to bring a solar man to go and come among terrestrial men? Since the floral atom exists, why should not the stellar atom exist?

That solar man will be, in turn, the *savant*, the seer, the calculator, the thaumaturgus, the navigator, the architect, the magian, the legislator, the philosopher, the prophet, the hero, the poet. The life of humanity will move onward through them. The transport of civilization will be their task; these spirit-teams will draw the huge chariot. One being unyoked, another will start again. Each turn of a century will be a stage, and there will never be a break in the connection. That which one mind begins, another mind will finish, chaining phenomenon to phenomenon, sometimes without suspecting links. To each revolution in fact will correspond an adequate revolution in idea, and reciprocally. The horizon will not be allowed to extend to the right without stretching as much to the left. Men the most diverse, the most opposite even, will find unexpected points of contact, and in these alliances the imperious logic of progress will be made plain. Orpheus, Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Moses, Manu, Mahomet, with many more, will be links of the same chain. A Gutenberg discovering a method for the sowing of civilization and a means for the ubiquity of thought, will be followed by a Christopher Columbus discovering a new field. A Christopher Columbus discovering a new world will be followed by a Luther discovering a new liberty. After Luther, innovator in dogma, will come Shakespeare, innovator in art. One genius completes another.

But not in the same region. The astronomer supplements the philosopher; the legislator is the executor of the poet's wishes; the fighting liberator lends his aid to the thinking liberator; the poet corroborates the statesman. Newton is the appendix to Bacon; Danton originates in Diderot; Milton confirms Cromwell; Byron supports Bozzaris; Æschylus, before him, has assisted Miltiades. The work is mysterious even for the men who perform it. Some are conscious of it, others are not. At great distances,

at intervals of centuries, the correlations manifest themselves, wonderful; the softening of human manners begun by the religious revealer, will be completed by the philosophical reasoner, so that Voltaire continues Jesus. Their work harmonizes and coincides. If this concordance depended upon them, both would resist, perhaps: the one, the divine man, indignant in his martyrdom; the other, the human man, humiliated in his irony. But the fact remains. Some power that is very high ordains it thus.

Yes, let us meditate upon these vast obscurities. Reverie fixes its gaze upon the shadow until there issues from it light.

Properly speaking, civilization is humanity developing itself from within outward. Human intelligence radiates, and, little by little, wins, subdues, and humanizes matter. Sublime domestication! This labour has phases, and each of these phases, marking an age in progress, is opened or closed by one of those beings called 'men of genius.' These missionary spirits, these legates of God, do they not carry in them a sort of partial solution of the question, so abstruse, of free-will? The apostolate, being an act of will, is related on one side to liberty; and on the other, being a mission, is related by predestination to fatality. The voluntary necessity. Such is the Messiah; such is genius.

Now let us return—for all questions which pertain to mystery form the circle from which one cannot escape—let us return to our starting-point and to our first question: What is a genius? Is it not perchance a cosmic soul,—a soul penetrated by a ray from the unknown? In what deeps are such souls prepared? What stages do they pass through? What medium do they traverse? What is the germination which precedes the hatching? What is the antenatal mystery? Where was this atom? It seems to be the point of intersection of all the forces. How come

all the powers to converge and tie themselves into an invisible unity in this sovereign intelligence? Who has brooded upon this eagle? The incubation of genius by the abysmal deep: what a riddle! These lofty souls, momentarily belonging to earth, have they not seen something else? Is it for that reason that they come to us with so many intuitions? Some of them seem full of the dream of a previous world. Is it thence that comes to them the terror that they sometimes feel? Is it this which inspires them with perplexing words? Is it this which fills them with strange agitations? Is it this which possesses them until they seem to see and touch imaginary things and beings? Moses had his burning bush; Socrates his familiar demon; Mahomet his dove; Luther his goblin playing with his pen, to whom he would say, 'Be still, there!' Pascal his open precipice, which he hid with a screen.

Many of these majestic souls are evidently conscious of a mission. They act at times as if they knew. They seem to have a confused certainty. They have it. They have it for the mysterious *ensemble*; they have it also for the detail. John Huss dying predicts Luther. He exclaims: 'You burn the goose (Huss), but the swan will come'. Who sends these souls? Who fills them with life? What is the law of their formation anterior and superior to life? Who provides them with force, patience, fruitfulness, will, wrath? From what urn of goodness have they drawn their austerity? In what regions of the lightnings have they gathered love? Each of these great new-born souls renews philosophy, or art, or science, or poetry, and recreates these worlds in its own image. They are as if impregnated with creative power. At times there emanates from these souls a truth which lights up the questions on which it falls: such a soul is like a star from which light should gutter. From what wonderful source, then, do they proceed, that they are all different? No one springs from the

other, and yet they have this in common,—that they all bring in the infinite. Incommensurable and insoluble question! That does not hinder worthy pedants and knowing people from bridling up and saying, as they point to the heights of civilization where shines the starry group of men of genius: 'You shall see no more men like those. They cannot be matched. There are no more of them. We declare to you that the earth has exhausted its contingent of master-spirits. Now for decadence and general closing up. We must make up our minds to it. We shall have no more men of genius'. Ah! you have seen the bottom of the unfathomable, you!

CHAPTER II

No, Thou art not worn out! Thou hast not before thee the bourn, the limit, the term, the frontier. Thou hast nothing to bound Thee, as winter bounds summer, as lassitude the birds, as the precipice the torrent, as the cliff the ocean, as the tomb man. Thou art without end. 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther', is spoken by Thee, and it is not spoken of Thee. No, Thou windest not a diminishing skein of brittle thread. No, Thou stoppest not short. No, Thy quantity decreaseth not; Thy breadth is not becoming narrowness; Thy faculty miscarrieth not. No, it is not true that they begin to perceive in Thy omnipotence that transparence which announces the end, and to get a glimpse of something else beyond Thee. Something beyond! And what then?—an obstacle: obstacle to whom? An obstacle to creation! an obstacle to the immanent! an obstacle to the necessary! What a dream!

Men say, 'This is as far as God advances. Ask no more of Him. He starts from here and stops there. In Homer, in Aristotle, in Newton, He has given you all that He had. Leave Him at rest now; His strength is drained. God does not begin again. He could

do that once, He cannot do it twice. He has quite spent Himself upon this man; enough of God does not remain to make a similar man'. At hearing such things, wert Thou a man like them, Thou wouldst smile in Thy dreadful deep; but Thou art not in a dreadful deep, and, being goodness, Thou hast no smile. The smile is but a passing wrinkle, unknown to the absolute.

Thou stricken by a chill! Thou cease! Thou suffer impediment! Thou to cry 'Halt!' Never. Shouldst Thou be compelled to take breath after having created a man? No; whoever that man may be, Thou art God. If this pale throng of living beings, in presence of the unknown, must feel wonder and dismay at something, it is not at beholding the generative principle dry up, and creative power grow sterile; it is, O God, at the eternal unleashing of miracles. The hurricane of miracles blows perpetually. Day and night the phenomena surge around us on all sides, and (what is not least marvellous) without disturbing the majestic tranquillity of the Creation. This tumult is harmony.

The huge concentric waves of universal life are shoreless. The starry sky that we study is but a partial appearance. We grasp but a few meshes of the vast network of existence. The complication of the phenomenon, of which a glimpse can be caught beyond our senses only by contemplation and ecstasy, makes the mind giddy. The thinker who reaches so far is to other men only a visionary. The necessary interlacement of the perceptible with the non-perceptible strikes the philosopher with stupor. This plenitude is required by Thy omnipotence, which admits no gap. The interpenetration of universe with universe makes part of Thy infinitude. Here we extend the word 'universe' to an order of facts that no astronomer can reach. In the Cosmos, invisible to fleshly eye, but revealed to vision, sphere blends with sphere without change of form, the creations

being of diverse density; so that, to all appearance, with our world is inexplicably merged another, invisible to us as we to it.

And Thou, centre and base of things, Thou, the 'I Am', exhausted! Can the absolute serenities be distressed, from time to time, by want of power on the part of the Infinite? Shall we believe that an hour may come when Thou canst no longer furnish the light of which humanity has need; that, mechanically unwearied, Thou mayst grow faint in the intellectual and moral order, so that men may say, 'God is extinct upon that side'? No! No! No! O Father!

Phidias created does not hinder Thee from making Michael Angelo. Michael Angelo formed, there still remains to Thee the material for Rembrandt. A Dante does not fatigue Thee. Thou art no more exhausted by a Homer than by a star. Auroras by the side of auroras, the indefinite renewal of meteors, worlds above worlds, the portentous passage of those flaming stars called comets, men of genius, Orpheus, then Moses, then Isaiah, then Æschylus, then Lucretius, then Tacitus, then Juvenal, then Cervantes and Rabelais, then Shakespeare, then Molière, then Voltaire, those who have been and those to come,—all at does not weary Thee. Chaos of constellations! ere is room in Thy immensity.

PART SECOND

BOOK I

SHAKESPEARE'S GENIUS

CHAPTER I

'SHAKESPEARE', says Forbes, 'had neither the tragic talent nor the comic talent. His tragedy is artificial, and his comedy is but instinctive.' Dr Johnson confirms the verdict. 'His tragedy is the product of industry, and his comedy the product of instinct.' After Forbes and Johnson have contested his claim to dramatic talent, Greene contests his claim to originality. Shakespeare is 'a plagiarist'; Shakespeare is 'a copyist'; Shakespeare 'has invented nothing'; he is 'a crow adorned with the plumes of others'; he pilfers from Æschylus, Boccaccio, Bandello, Hollinshed, Belleforest, Benoist de St. Maur; he pilfers from Layamon, Robert of Gloucester, Robert of Wace, Peter of Langtoft, Robert Manning, John de Mandeville, Sackville, Spenser; he pilfers from the *Arcadia* of Sidney; he pilfers from the anonymous work called *The True Chronicle of King Leir*; he pilfers from Rowley, in *The Troublesome Reign of King John* (1591), the character of the bastard Faulconridge. Shakespeare plunders Robert Greene; Shakespeare plunders Dekker and Chettle. *Hamlet* is not his; *Othello* is not his. As for Green, Shakespeare is for him not only 'a bumbaster of blank verses', a 'Shakescene', a *Johannes factotum* (allusion to his former position as call-boy and supernumerary); Shakespeare is a wild beast. Crow no longer suffices; Shakespeare is promoted to a tiger. Here is the text: 'Tyger's

heart wrapt in a player's hide' (*A Groats-worth of Wit*, 1592) [1].

Thomas Rymer thus judges *Othello*: 'The moral of this story is certainly very instructive; it is a warning to good housewives to look after their linen'. Then the same Rymer condescends to give up joking, and to take Shakespeare in earnest: 'What edifying and useful impression can the audience receive from such poetry? To what can this poetry serve, unless it is to mislead our good sense, to throw our thoughts into disorder, to trouble our brain, to pervert our instincts, to crack our imaginations, to corrupt our taste, and to fill our heads with vanity, confusion, clatter, and nonsense?' This was printed some four-score years after the death of Shakespeare, in 1693. All the critics and all the connoisseurs were of one opinion.

Here are some of the reproaches unanimously addressed to Shakespeare: Conceits, word-play, puns. Improbability, extravagance, absurdity. Obscenity. Puerility. Bombast, emphasis, exaggeration. False glitter, pathos. Far-fetched ideas, affected style. Abuse of contrast and metaphor. Subtilty. Immorality. Writing for the mob. Pandering to the rabble.

[1] It may be well to transcribe the familiar passage referred to, noting that Hugo here distinguishes between Robert Greene, the dramatist (whom he re-christens Thomas) and an imaginary critic, 'Green.' In the *Groats-worth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentaunce*, written by the unhappy Greene upon his death-bed, he warns his fellow playwrights of certain 'puppits that speak from our mouths those anticks garnished in our colours'. 'Yes, trust them not; for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a players hide*, supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you; and being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie.' Greene's reference to the line of *Henry VI* Part III, 'O tiger's heart, wrapped in a woman's hide!' is of extreme interest, says Halliwell-Phillipps, as including the earliest record of words composed by the great dramatist. Tr.

Delighting in the horrible. Want of grace. Want of charm. Overreaching his aim. Having too much wit. Having no wit. Overdoing his work.

'This Shakespeare is a rude and savage mind', says Lord Shaftesbury. Dryden adds, 'Shakespeare is unintelligible'. Mrs Lennox applies the ferule to Shakespeare as follows: 'This poet alters historical truth'. A German critic of 1680, Bentheim, feels himself disarmed, because, says he, 'Shakespeare is a mind full of drollery'. Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's *protégé*, relates (ix, 175, Gifford's edition): 'I recollect that the players often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare that, in his writing, whatsoever he penned, he never blotted out a line: I answered. "Would to God he had blotted out a thousand!"' This wish, moreover, was granted by the worthy publishers of 1623, Blount and Jaggard. They struck out of *Hamlet* alone, two hundred lines; they cut out two hundred and twenty lines of *King Lear* [1]. Garrick played at Drury Lane only the *King Lear* of Nahum Tate [2]. Listen again to Rymer: '*Othello* is a sanguinary farce without wit'. Dr Johnson adds: '*Julius Cæsar*, a cold tragedy, and lacking the power to move the public'. 'I think', says Warburton, in a letter to the Dean of St Asaph, 'that Swift has much more wit than Shakespeare, and that the comic in Shakespeare, altogether low as it is, is very inferior to the comic in Shadwell'. As for the witches in *Macbeth*, 'nothing equals', says that critic of the seventeenth century, Forbes, repeated by a critic

[1] This statement is very wild. Readers unversed in literary history should consult Dowden, or Halliwell-Phillipps, or Mrs. Caroline H. Dall's popularization of the latter, entitled, *What we really know about Shakespeare*. Tr.

[2] Furness says that Tate's version of *Lear* held the stage for a hundred and sixty years, and in it all the greatest actors won applause. Macready (*Reminiscences*) says it 'was the only acting copy from the date of its production until the restoration of Shakespeare's tragedy at Covent Garden in 1838'. Tr.

of the nineteenth, 'the absurdity of such a spectacle'. Samuel Foote, the author of *The Young Hypocrite*, makes this declaration: 'The comic in Shakespeare is too heavy, and does not make one laugh; it is buffoonery without wit'. Finally, Pope, in 1725, finds a reason why Shakespeare wrote his dramas, and exclaims, 'One must eat!'

After these words of Pope, one cannot understand with what object Voltaire, aghast about Shakespeare, writes: 'Shakespeare, *whom the English take for a Sophocles*, flourished about the time of Lopez [*Lope*, if you please, Voltaire] de Vega'. Voltaire adds: 'You are not ignorant that in *Hamlet* the diggers prepare a grave, drinking, singing ballads, and cracking over the heads of dead people jokes appropriate to men of their profession'. And, concluding, he characterizes the whole scene by the term 'these fooleries'. He characterizes Shakespeare's pieces as 'monstrous farces called tragedies', and completes the judgment by declaring that Shakespeare 'has ruined the English theatre'.

Marmontel comes to see Voltaire at Ferney. Voltaire is in bed, holding a book in his hand; all at once he rises up, throws the book away, stretches his thin legs out of the bed, and cries to Marmontel: 'Your Shakespeare is a Huron Indian'. 'He is not my Shakespeare at all', replies Marmontel.

Shakespeare was an occasion for Voltaire to show his skill at the target. Voltaire missed it rarely. Voltaire shot at Shakespeare as peasants shoot at a goose. It was Voltaire who had opened in France the fire against this Barbarian. He nicknamed him the 'Saint Christopher of Tragic Poets'. He said to Madame de Graffigny: 'Shakespeare for a jest'. He said to Cardinal de Bernis, 'Compose pretty verses; deliver us, monsignor, from plagues, from bigots, from the Academy of the King of Prussia, from the Bull Unigenitus and its supporters, from the convulsionists, and from that ninny Shakespeare.

Libera nos, Domine'. The attitude of Fréron toward Voltaire has in the eyes of posterity as an extenuating circumstance the attitude of Voltaire toward Shakespeare. Nevertheless, throughout the eighteenth century Voltaire gives the law. The moment that Voltaire sneers at Shakespeare, Englishmen of wit, such as my Lord Marshal, follow suit. Dr Johnson admits 'the ignorance and vulgarity' of Shakespeare. Frederick II also puts in a word. He writes to Voltaire in respect of Julius Cæsar: 'You have done well in recasting, according to principles, the formless piece of that Englishman'. Thus stood Shakespeare in the last century. Voltaire insults him; La Harpe protects him: 'Shakespeare himself, coarse as he was, was not without reading and knowledge'[1].

In our days, the class of critics of whom we have just seen some samples have not lost courage. Coleridge speaks of *Measure for Measure*: 'a painful comedy', he hints. 'Revolting', says Mr Knight. 'Disgusting', responds Mr Hunter [2].

In 1804 the author of one of those idiotic Universal Biographies,—in which they contrive to relate the history of Calas without mentioning the name of Voltaire, and to which governments, knowing what they are about, grant readily their patronage and subsidies,—a certain Delandine, feels himself called upon to be a judge, and to pass sentence on Shakespeare; and after having said that 'Shakespeare, which is pronounced Chekspir', had, in his youth, 'stolen the deer of a nobleman', he adds: 'Nature had brought together in the head of this poet the highest greatness we can imagine, with the lowest coarseness, without wit'. Lately we read the following words, written

[1] La Harpe, *Introduction to the Course in Literature*.

[2] Victor Hugo could hardly have betrayed with more charming simplicity his unique and delightful ignoance of English literature than by thus confusing with Shakespeare's revilers such devout worshippers as Coleridge and Knight. TR.

a short time ago by an eminent dolt who is still living: 'Second-rate authors and inferior poets, such as Shakespeare', etc.

CHAPTER II

THE poet is necessarily at once poet, historian, and philosopher. Herodotus and Thales are included in Homer. Shakespeare, likewise, is this triple man. He is besides, a painter, a painter upon a colossal scale. The poet in reality does more than relate, he exhibits. Poets have in them a reflector, observation, and a condenser, emotion; thence those grand luminous spectres which issue from their brain, and which go on shining for ever against the murky human wall. These phantoms have life. To have an existence as real as that of Achilles would be the ambition of Alexander. Shakespeare has tragedy, comedy, fairy scenes, hymn, farce, deep divine laughter, terror and horror,—in one word, the drama. He touches the two poles: he belongs to Olympus and to the itinerant show. No possibility escapes him. When he grasps you, you are subdued. Do not expect pity from him. His cruelty is pathetic. He shows you a mother, Constance, the mother of Arthur; and when he has brought you to such a point of tenderness that your heart is as her heart, he kills the child. He goes farther in horror even than history,—a difficult feat: he does not content himself with killing Rutland and driving York to despair; he dips in the blood of the son the handkerchief with which he wipes the father's eyes. He causes Elegy to be choked by the Drama, Desdemona by Othello. No respite to anguish: genius is inexorable. It has its law, and follows it. The mind also has its inclined planes, and these slopes determine its direction. Shakespeare flows toward the terrible. Shakespeare, Æschylus, Dante, are great streams of human emotion pouring from the depth of their cavern the urn of tears.

The poet is only limited by his aim; he considers nothing but the idea to be worked out; he recognizes no sovereignty, no necessity, save the idea: for since Art emanates from the Absolute, in Art, as in the Absolute, the end justifies the means. This is, it may be said in passing, one of those deviations from the ordinary terrestrial law which make the higher criticism muse and reflect, and which reveal to it the mysterious side of Art. In Art, above all, is visible the *quid divinum*. The poet moves in his work as Providence in its own. He excites, dismays, strikes; then exalts or depresses, often in inverse ratio to your expectation, ploughing into your very soul through surprise. Now consider. Art, like the Infinite, has a *Because* superior to all the *Whys*. Go and ask of the Ocean, that great lyric poet, the wherefore of a tempest. What seems to you odious or absurd has an inner reason for existing. Ask of Job why he scrapes the pus from his ulcer with a potsherd, and of Dante why he sews with a thread of iron the eyelids of the ghosts in Purgatory, making the stitches trickle with frightful tears [1]. Job upon his dunghcap continues to clean his sore with his potsherd, and Dante goes on his way. It is the same with Shakespeare.

His sovereign horrors reign and force themselves upon you. He mingles with them, when he chooses, the charm, the august charm, of the strong, excelling the feeble sweetness, the slender attraction, of Ovid or of Tibullus, as the Venus of Milo excels the Venus of Medici. The things of the unknown; the metaphysical problems which recede beneath the diving plummet; the enigmas of the soul and of Nature, which is also a soul; the far-off intuitions of the eventual included in destiny; the amalgams of thought

[1] 'And as the sun does not reach the blind, so the spirits of which I was just speaking have not the gift of light. An iron wire pierces and fastens together their eyelids, as it is done to the wild hawk in order to tame it.' *Purgatory*, canto xiii.

and event,—can be translated into delicate traceries, filling poetry with mysterious and exquisite types, the more lovely that they are somewhat sorrowful, half clinging to the invisible, and at the same time very real, absorbed by the shadow behind them, and yet endeavouring to give you pleasure. Profound grace does exist.

Prettiness combined with greatness is possible; it is found in Homer,—Astyanax is a type of it; but the profound grace of which we speak is something more than this epic delicacy. It is complicated with a certain agitation, and hints the infinite. It is a kind of irradiance of blended light and shade. Modern genius alone has that smiling profundity which discloses the abyss while veiling it with beauty.

Shakespeare possesses this grace,—the very contrary of morbid grace, although resembling it, emanating, as it also does, from the tomb. Sorrow, the deep sorrow of the drama, which is but the human social atmosphere transferred to Art, envelops this grace and this horror.

At the centre of his work is Hamlet,—doubt; and at the two extremities, love,—Romeo and Othello, the whole heart. There is light in the folds of Juliet's shroud, but only blackness in the winding-sheet of Ophelia disdained and of Desdemona suspected. These two innocents, to whom love has broken faith, cannot be consoled. Desdemona sings the song of the willow, under which the water sweeps away Ophelia. They are sisters without knowing each other, and kindred souls, although each has her separate drama. The willow trembles over them both. In the mysterious song of the calumniated woman who is about to die, floats the dishevelled shadow of the drowned Ophelia.

Shakespeare in philosophy goes at times deeper than Homer. Beyond Priam there is Lear; to weep at ingratitude is worse than to weep at death. Homer meets envy and strikes it with the sceptre; Shakespeare gives the sceptre to the envious, and out of

Thersites creates Richard III. Envy is exposed in its nakedness all the more strongly for being clothed in purple; its reason for existing is then visibly altogether in itself: envy on the throne,—what more striking?

Deformity in the person of the tyrant is not enough for this philosopher; he must have it also in the shape of the valet, and he creates Falstaff. The dynasty of common sense, inauguarated in Panurge, continued in Sancho Panza, goes wrong and miscarries in Falstaff. The rock which this wisdom splits upon is, in reality, baseness. Sancho Panza, in combination with the ass, is one with ignorance; Falstaff—glutton, poltroon, savage, obscene, a human face and belly with the lower parts of the brute—walks on the four hoofs of turpitude; Falstaff is the centaur man and pig.

Shakespeare is, above all, imagination. Now—and this is a truth to which we have already alluded, and which is well known to thinkers—imagination is depth. No faculty of the mind penetrates and plunges deeper than imagination; it is the great diver. Science, reaching the lowest depths, meets imagination. In conic sections, in logarithms, in the differential and integral calculus, in the calculations of sonorous waves, in the application of algebra to geometry, the imagination is the coefficient of calculation, and mathematics becomes poetry. I have no faith in the science of stupid men of learning.

The poet philosophizes because he imagines. That is why Shakespeare has that sovereign management of reality which enables him to have his way with it. And his very whims are varieties of the true,—varieties which deserve meditation. Does not destiny resemble a constant whim? Nothing more incoherent in appearance, nothing less connected, nothing worse as deduction. Why crown this monster, John? Why kill that child, Arthur? Why have Joan of Arc burned? Why Monk triumphant? Why Louis XV happy? Why Louis XVI punished? Let the logic

of God pass. It is from that logic that the fancy of the poet is drawn. Comedy bursts forth in the midst of tears; the sob rises out of laughter; figures mingle and clash; massive forms, as of beasts, pass clumsily; spectres—women, perhaps, perhaps smoke—float about; souls, dragon-flies of the shadow, flies of the twilight, flutter among all those black reeds that we call passions and events. At one pole Lady Macbeth, at the other Titania: a colossal thought, and an immense caprice.

What are *The Tempest, Troilus and Cressida, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Merry Wives of Windsor, The Midsummer Night's Dream, The Winter's Tale?* They are fancy, arabesque work. The arabesque in Art is the same phenomenon as vegetation in Nature. The arabesque sprouts, grows, knots, exfoliates, multiplies, becomes green, blooms, and entwines itself with every dream. The arabesque is incommensurable; it has a strange power of extension and enlargement; it fills horizons, and opens up others; it intercepts the luminous background by innumerable interlacements; and if you mingle the human face with these entangled branches, the whole thrills you and makes you giddy. Behind the arabesque, and through its openings, all philosophy can be seen; vegetation lives; man becomes pantheistic; an infinite combination takes form in the infinite; and before such work, in which are blended the impossible and the true, the human soul quivers with an emotion obscure, and yet supreme.

For all this, the edifice ought not to be overrun by vegetation, nor the drama by arabesque.

One of the characteristics of genius is the singular union of faculties the most distant. To design an astragal like Ariosto, then to scrutinize the soul like Pascal,—such are the poet's gifts. Man's inner tribunal belongs to Shakespeare, and he finds you constant surprises there. He extracts from human consciousness whatever it contains of the unforeseen. Few poets surpass him in this psychical research. Many

of the strangest peculiarities of the human mind are indicated by him. He skilfully makes us feel the simplicity of the metaphysical fact under the complication of the dramatic fact. That which the human creature does not acknowledge to himself, the obscure thing that he begins by fearing and ends by desiring,—such is the point of junction and the strange place of meeting for the heart of the virgin and the heart of the murderer, for the soul of Juliet and the soul of Macbeth; the innocent girl fears and longs for love, just as the wicked man for ambition. Perilous kisses given furtively to the phantom, now smiling and anon austere.

To all this prodigality—analysis, synthesis, creation in flesh and bone, reverie, fancy, science, metaphysics—add history: here the history of historians, there the history of the tale. This history contains specimens of everything: of the traitor, from Macbeth, the assassin of his guest, up to Coriolanus, the assassin of his country; of the despot, from the tyrant brain, Cæsar, to the tyrant belly, Henry VIII; of the carnivore, from the lion down to the ursurer. One may say to Shylock, 'Well bitten, Jew!' And in the background of this wonderful drama, on the desert heath, there appear in the twilight three black shapes promising crowns to murderers,—silhouettes in which Hesiod, through the vista of ages, perhaps recognizes the Parcæ. Inordinate force, exquisite charm, epic ferocity, pity, creative faculty, gaiety (that lofty gaiety unintelligible to narrow understandings), sarcasm (the cutting lash for the wicked), sidereal grandeur, microscopic tenuity, a universe of poetry, with its zenith and its nadir, the vast whole, the profound detail,—nothing is wanting in this mind. One feels, on approaching the work of this man, a vast wind blowing off the shores of a world. The irradiation of genius on every side,—such is Shakespeare. 'Totus in antithesi', says Jonathan Forbes.

CHAPTER III

One of the characteristics which distinguish men of genius from ordinary minds, is that they have a double reflection,—just as the carbuncle, according to Jerome Cardan, differs from crystal and glass in having a double refraction.

Genius and carbuncle, double reflection, double refraction: the same phenomenon in the moral and in the physical order.

Does this diamond of diamonds, the carbuncle, exist? It is a question. Alchemy says yes; chemistry searches. As for genius, it does exist. It is sufficient to read one verse of Æschylus or Juvenal in order to find this carbuncle of the human brain.

This phenomenon of double reflection raises to the highest power in men of genius what rhetoricans call 'antithesis'; that is to say, the sovereign faculty of seeing the two sides of things.

I dislike Ovid,—that proscribed coward, that licker of bloody hands, that fawning cur of exile, that far-away flatterer disdained by the tyrant,—and I hate the literary elegance of which Ovid is full; but I do not confound that elegance with the powerful antithesis of Shakespeare.

Complete minds have everything. Shakespeare contains Gongora, as Michael Angelo contains Bernini; and there are on that subject ready-made sentences: 'Michael Angelo is a mannerist, Shakespeare is antithetical'. These are the formulas of the school which express the petty view of the great question of contrast in Art.

Totus in antithesi. Shakespeare is all in antithesis. Certainly it is not very just to see the entire man, and such a man, in one of his qualities. But, with this reservation, let us observe that this saying, *totus in antithesi*, which pretends to be a criticism, might be simply a statement of fact. Shakespeare, in fact, has deserved, like all truly great poets, this praise,—

that he is like creation. What is creation? Good and evil, joy and sorrow, man and woman, roar and song, eagle and vulture, lightning and ray, bee and drone, mountain and valley, love and hate, the medal and its reverse, beauty and ugliness, star and swine, high and low, Nature is the eternal bifrons. And this antithesis, whence comes the antiphrasis, is found in all the habits of man; it is in fable, in history, in philosophy, in language. Are you the Furies, they call you Eumenides, the Charming; do you kill your brother, you are called Philadelphus; kill your father, they will call you Philopater; be a great general, they will call you the little corporal. The antithesis of Shakespeare is the universal antithesis, present always and everywhere; it is the ubiquity of opposites, —life and death, cold and heat, just and unjust, angel and demon, heaven and earth, flower and lightning, melody and harmony, spirit and flesh, high and low, ocean and envy, foam and slaver, hurricane and whistle, self and not-self, objective and subjective, marvel and miracle, type and monster, soul and shadow. It is from this sombre, flagrant quarrel, from this endless ebb and flow, from this perpetual yes and no, from this irreconcilable opposition, from this vast, permanent antagonism, that Rembrandt obtains his clare-obscure, and Piranesi his vertiginous effects.

Before removing this antithesis from Art, we should begin by removing it from Nature.

CHAPTER IV

'He is reserved and discreet. You may trust him; he will take no advantage. He has, above all, a very rare quality,—he is sober'.

What is this—a recommendation for a domestic? No. It is an eulogy upon a writer. A certain school called 'serious', has in our days hoisted this motto for poetry: sobriety. It seems that the only question should be to preserve literature from indigestion.

Formerly the device was 'fecundity and power'; to-day it is 'barley-gruel'. You are in the resplendent garden of the Muses, where those divine blossoms of the mind that the Greeks call 'tropes' blow in riot and luxuriance on every branch; everywhere the ideal image, everywhere the thought-flower, everywhere fruits, metaphors, golden apples, perfumes, colours, rays, strophes, wonders: touch nothing, be discreet. It is by plucking nothing there that the poet is known. Be of the temperance society. A good critical book is a treatise on the dangers of drinking. Do you wish to compose the *Iliad*, put yourself on diet. Ah! thou mayest well open wide thine eyes, old Rabelais!

Lyricism is heady; the beautiful intoxicates, the noble inebriates, the ideal causes giddiness. One who makes it his starting point no longer knows what he is about. When you have walked among the stars, you are capable of refusing an under prefecture; you are no longer in your right mind; they might offer you a seat in the senate of Domitian, and you would refuse it; you no longer render to Cæsar what is due to Cæsar; you have reached such a point of mental alienation that you will not even salute the Lord Incitatus, consul and horse. See what is the result of your having been drinking in that shocking place, the Empyrean! You become proud, ambitious, disinterested. Now be sober. It is forbidden to haunt the tavern of the sublime

Liberty means libertinism. To restrain yourself is well; to emasculate yourself is better.

Pass your life in holding in.

Sobriety, decorum, respect for authority, irreproachable toilet. No poetry unless it is fashionably dressed. An uncombed savannah, a lion which does not pare its nails, an unregulated torrent, the navel of the sea which exposes itself to the sight, the cloud which forgets itself so far as to show Aldebaran.—Oh! shocking. The wave foams on the rock, the

cataract vomits into the gulf, Juvenal spits on the tyrant. Fie!

We like too little better than too much. No exaggeration. Henceforth the rose-bush is to be required to count its roses; the meadow to be requested not to be so prodigal of daisies; the spring to be commanded to calm itself. The nests are rather too prolific. Attention, groves! not so many warblers, if you please. The Milky Way will have the goodness to number its stars; there are a good many.

Take example from the big *Cereus serpentaria* of the Jardin des Plantes, which blooms but once in fifty years: that is a flower truly respectable.

A true critic of the sober school is that gardenkeeper who, to the question, 'Have you any nightingales in your trees?' replied, 'Ah! don't mention it; during the whole month of May these ugly fowl have been doing nothing but bawl'.

M. Suard gave to Marie Joseph Chénier this certificate: 'His style has the great merit of not containing comparisons'. In our days we have seen that singular eulogy reproduced. This reminds us that a great professor of the Restoration, indignant at the comparisons and figures which abound in the prophets, put a crusher on Isaiah, Daniel, and Jeremiah, with this profound apophthegm: 'The whole Bible is in *like*'. Another, a greater professor still, was the author of this saying, still celebrated at the École Normale: 'I toss Juvenal back upon the romantic dunghill'. Of what crime was Juvenal guilty? Of the same crime as Isaiah; namely, of being fond of expressing the idea by image. Shall we return, little by little, in the walks of learning, to metonymy as a term of chemistry, and to the opinion of Pradon touching metaphor?

One would suppose, from the demands and clamours of the doctrinaire school, that it had to furnish, at its own expense, the whole supply of the metaphors and figures that poets may use, and that it felt itself ruined

by spendthrifts like Pindar, Aristophanes, Ezekiel, Plautus, and Cervantes. This school puts under lock and key passions, sentiments, the human heart, reality, the ideal, life. It looks with dismay upon men of genius, hides from them everything, and says, 'How greedy they are!' It has, accordingly, invented for writers this superlative praise: 'He is temperate'.

On all these points, vestry-room criticism fraternizes with doctrinaire criticism. The prude and the devotee are cheek-by-jowl.

A curious bashful fashion tends to prevail. We blush at the coarse manner in which grenadiers meet death. Rhetoric has for heroes modest vine-leaves termed 'periphrases'. It is assumed that the bivouac speaks like the convent; the talk of the guard-room is a calumny. A veteran drops his eyes at the recollection of Waterloo, and the Cross of the Legion of Honour is given to these downcast eyes. Certain sayings which are in history have no right to be historical; and it is well understood, for example, that the gendarme who fired a pistol at Robespierre at the Hôtel de Ville rejoiced in the name 'The-guard-dies-and-never-surrenders' [1].

From the combined effort of the two schools of criticism, guardians of public tranquillity, there results a salutary reaction. This reaction has already produced some specimens of poets,—steady, well-bred, prudent, whose style always keeps good hours; who never indulge in an outing with those mad creatures, Ideas; who are never met at the corner of a wood, *solus cum solâ*, with Reverie, that gypsy girl; who are incapable of having relations either with Imagination, dangerous vagabond, or with the bacchante Inspiration, or with the grisette Fancy; who have never in their lives given a kiss to that beggarly chit,

[1] It is said that an indecent word of Cambronne (a commander of the Old Guard at Waterloo), in answer to the summons to surrender, was translated by some big-wig historian into this bit of heroic claptrap. Tr.

the Muse; who never sleep away from home, and who are honoured with the esteem of their doorkeeper, Nicholas Boileau. If Polyhymnia goes by with her hair floating a little, what a scandal! Quick! they call the hairdresser. M. de la Harpe comes hastily. These two sister schools of criticism, that of the doctrinaire and that of the sacristan, undertake to educate. They bring up little writers. They keep a place to wean them,—a boarding-school for juvenile reputations.

Thence a discipline, a literature, and art. Fall into line,—right dress! Society must be saved in literature as well as politics. Every one knows that poetry is a frivolous, insignificant thing, childishly occupied in seeking rhymes, barren, vain; consequently nothing is more formidable. It behoves us to tie up the thinkers securely. To the kennel with him! He is dangerous! What is a poet? For honour, nothing; for persecution, everything.

This race of writers requires repression; it is useful to have recourse to the secular arm. The means vary. From time to time a good banishment is expedient. The list of exiled writers opens with Æschylus, and does not close with Voltaire. Each century has its link in the chain. But there must be at least a pretext for exile, banishment, and proscription. Exile cannot be applied in all cases. It is rather unhandy; it is important to have a lighter weapon for every-day skirmishing. A State criticism, duly sworn and accredited, can render service. To organize the persecution of writers is not a bad thing. To entrap the pen by the pen is ingenious. Why not have literary policemen?

Good taste is a precaution taken to keep the peace. Sober writers are the counterpart of prudent electors. Inspiration is suspected of love for liberty. Poetry is rather outside of legality; there is, therefore, an official art, the offspring of official criticism.

A whole special rhetoric proceeds from these premises.

Nature has in this particular art but a narrow entrance, and goes in through the sidedoor. Nature is infected with demagogism. The elements are suppressed, as being in bad form and making too much uproar. The equinoctial storm is guilty of trespass; the squall is a midnight row. The other day, at the School of Fine Arts, a pupil painter having caused the wind to lift up the folds of a mantle during a storm, a local professor, shocked at this disordered apparel, said: 'Style does not admit of wind'.

Moreover, reaction does not despair. We get on; some progress is made. A ticket of confession sometimes gets its bearer admitted into the Academy. Jules Janin, Théophile Gautier, Paul de Saint-Victor, Littré Renan, please to recite your *credo*.

But that does not suffice; the evil is deep-rooted. The ancient Catholic society and the ancient legitimate literature are threatened. Darkness is in peril. To arms against the new generations! To arms against the modern spirit! And down with Democracy, the daughter of Philosophy!

Cases of rabidness—that is to say, works of genius—are to be feared. Hygienic prescriptions are renewed. The public high-road is evidently badly watched. It appears that there are some poets wandering about. The prefect of police, a negligent man, allows some spirits to rove. What is Authority thinking of? Let us take care. There is danger lest men's minds may be bitten. Indeed, the rumour is confirmed that Shakespeare has been met without a muzzle on.

This Shakespeare without a muzzle is the present translation [1].

CHAPTER V

If ever a man was undeserving of the good character, 'he is sober' [2], it is most certainly William Shake-

[1] The Complete Works of Shakespeare, translated by François Victor Hugo.

[2] See the beginning of the preceding chapter. Tr.

speare. Shakespeare is one of the worst cases that serious æsthetics ever had to regulate.

Shakespeare is fertility, force, exuberance, the swelling breast, the foaming cup, the brimming trough, sap in excess, lava in torrents, the universal rain of life, everything by thousands, everything by millions, no reticence, no ligature, no economy, the inordinate and tranquil prodigality of the creator. To those who fumble in the bottom of their pockets, the inexhaustible seems insane. Will it stop soon? Never. Shakespeare is the sower of dazzling wonders. At every turn, an image; at every turn, contrast; at every turn, light and darkness.

The poet, we have said, is Nature. Subtle, minute, keen, microscopical like Nature, and yet vast. Not discreet, not reserved, not parsimonious; magnificently simple. Let us explain this word 'simple'.

Sobriety in poetry is poverty; simplicity is grandeur. To give to each thing the quantity of space which fits it, neither more nor less; this is simplicity. Simplicity is justice. The whole law of tasteisin that. Each thing put in its own place and spoken with its own word. On the single condition that a certain latent equilibrium is maintained and a certain mysterious proportion is preserved, simplicity may be found in the most stupendous complication, either in the style or in the *ensemble*. These are the arcana of great art. The higher criticism alone, which takes its starting-point from enthusiasm, penetrates and comprehends these profound laws. Opulence, profusion, dazzling radiancy, may be simplicity. The sun is simple.

Such simplicity evidently does not resemble the simplicity recommended by Le Batteux, the Abbé d'Aubignac, and Father Bouhours.

Whatever may be the abundance, whatever may be the entanglement, even were it perplexing, confused, and inextricable, all that is true is simple. The only form of simplicity recognized by Art is the simplicity that is profound.

Simplicity, being true, is artless. Artlessness is the countenance of truth. Shakespeare is simple in the grand manner; he is infatuated with it: but petty simplicity is unknown to him.

The simplicity which is impotence, the simplicity which is meagreness, the simplicity which is short-winded, is a case for pathology. A hospital ticket suits it better than a ride on the hippogriff.

I admit that the hump of Thersites is simple; but the pectoral muscles of Hercules are simple also. I prefer this simplicity to the other.

The simplicity proper to poetry may be as bushy as the oak. Does the oak happen to produce on you the effect of a Byzantine and of a delicate being? Its innumerable antitheses,—gigantic trunk and small leaves, rough bark and velvet mosses, absorption of rays and lavishness of shade, crowns for heroes and mast for swine,—are they marks of affectation, corruption, subtlety, and bad taste? Could the oak be too witty? could the oak belong to the Hôtel Rambouillet? could the oak be a finical prude? could the oak be tainted with Gongorism? could the oak belong to an age of decadence? Is it possible that all simplicity, *sancta simplicitas*, is concentrated in the cabbage?

Refinement, excess of wit, affectation, Gongorism,—all that has been hurled at Shakespeare's head. They say that these are the faults of littleness, and they hasten to reproach the giant with them.

But then this Shakespeare respects nothing; he goes straight on, putting out of breath those who wish to follow him. He strides over proprieties, he overthrows Aristotle, he spreads havoc among the Jesuits, the Methodists, the Purists, and the Puritans; he puts Loyola to disorderly rout, and upsets Wesley; he is valiant, bold, enterprising, militant, direct. His inkstand smokes like a crater. He is always laborious, ready, spirited, disposed, pressing forward. Pen in hand, his brow blazing, he goes on, driven by

the demon of genius. The stallion is over-demonstrative; there are jack-mules passing by, to whom this is displeasing. To be prolific is to be aggressive. A poet like Isaiah, like Juvenal, like Shakespeare, is, in truth, exorbitant. By all that is holy, some attention ought to be paid to others; one man has no right to everything! What! virility always, inspiration everywhere; as many metaphors as the meadow, as many antitheses as the oak, as many contrasts and depths as the universe; incessant generation, pubescence, hymen, gestation; a vast unity with exquisite and robust detail, living communion, fecundation, plenitude, production! It is too much; it infringes the rights of neuters.

For nearly three centuries Shakespeare, this poet all brimming with virility, has been looked upon by sober critics with that discontented air which certain bereaved spectators must have in the seraglio.

Shakespeare has no reserve, no restraint, no limit, no blank. What is wanting in him is that he wants nothing. He needs no savings-bank. He does not keep Lent. He overflows like vegetation, like germination, like light, like flame. Yet this does not hinder him from thinking of you, spectator or reader, from preaching to you, from giving you advice, from being your friend, like the first good-natured La Fontaine you meet, and from rendering you small services. You can warm your hands at the conflagration he kindles.

Othello, Romeo, Iago, Macbeth, Shylock, Richard III, Julius Cæsar, Oberon, Puck, Ophelia, Desdemona, Juliet, Titania, men, women, witches, fairies, souls,—Shakespeare is the grand distributor; take, take, take, all of you! Do you want more? Here are Ariel, Parolles, Macduff, Prospero, Viola, Miranda, Caliban. More yet? Here are Jessica, Cordelia, Cressida, Portia, Brabantio, Polonius, Horatio, Mercutio, Imogen, Pandarus of Troy, Bottom, Theseus. *Ecce Deus!* It is the poet, he offers himself; who will

have me? He gives, scatters, squanders himself; he is never empty. Why? He cannot be. Exhaustion is impossible with him. In him is something of the fathomless. He fills up again, and spends himself; then recommences. He is the spendthrift of genius.

In licence and audacity of language Shakespeare equals Rabelais, whom a few days ago, a swan-like critic called a 'swine.'

Like all lofty minds in full riot of omnipotence, Shakespeare decants all Nature, drinks it, and makes you drink it. Voltaire reproached him for his drunkenness; and was quite right. Why on earth, we repeat, why has this Shakespeare such a temperament? He does not stop, he does not feel fatigue, he is without pity for the poor weak stomachs that are candidates for the Academy. The gastritis called 'good taste' does not afflict him. He is powerful. What is this vast intemperate song that he sings through the centuries—war-song, drinking-song, love-ditty—which passes from King Lear to Queen Mab, and from Hamlet to Falstaff, heart-rending at times as a sob, grand as the *Iliad*? 'I am stiff all over from reading Shakespeare', said M. Auger.

His poetry has the sharp tang of honey made by the vagabond hiveless bee. Here prose, there verse; all forms, being but receptacles for the idea, suit him. This poetry mourns and jests. The English tongue, a language little formed, now serves, now hinders him; but everywhere the deep mind makes itself seen and felt. Shakespeare's drama moves forward with a kind of distracted rhythm; it is so vast that it staggers; it has and gives the vertigo: but nothing is so solid as this palpitating grandeur. Shakespeare, shuddering, has within himself winds, spirits, magic potions, vibrations; he sways in the passing breeze, obscure effluences pervade him, he is filled with the unknown sap of life. Thence his agitation, at the core of which is peace. It is this agitation which

is lacking in Goethe, wrongly praised for his impassiveness, which is inferiority. All minds of the first order have this agitation. It is in Job, in Æschylus, in Alighieri. This agitation is humanity. On earth the divine must be human. It must propose to itself its own riddle, and be distressed by it. Inspiration being a miracle, a sacred stupor mingles with it. A certain majesty of mind resembles solitude and is blended with wonder. Shakespeare, like all great poets, like all great things, is absorbed by a dream. His own vegetation dismays him; his own tempest appals him. It seems at times as if Shakespeare terrified Shakespeare. He shudders at his own depth. This is the sign of supreme intelligence. It is his own vastness which shakes him and imparts to him strange and mighty oscillations. There is no genius without billows. An intoxicated savage, it may be. He has the savagery of the virgin forest; he has the intoxication of the high sea.

Shakespeare—the condor alone gives some idea of such gigantic flight—departs, arrives, starts again, mounts, descends, hovers, sinks, dives, drops, submerges himself in the depths below, merges into the depths above. He is one of those geniuses that God purposely leaves unbridled, so that they may go headlong and in full flight into the infinite.

From time to time there comes to this globe one of these spirits. Their passage, as we have said, renews art, science, philosophy, or society.

They fill a century, then disappear. Then it is not one century alone that their light illumines, it is humanity from the beginning to the end of time; and we perceive that each of these men was the human mind itself contained whole in one brain, and coming, at a given moment, to impart new impetus to earthly progress.

These supreme spirits, their life ended and their work done, in death rejoin the mysterious group of those who are at home in the infinite.

BOOK II

SHAKESPEARE'S WORK : THE CULMINATING POINTS

CHAPTER I

THE characteristic of men of genius of the first order is to produce each a peculiar model of man. All bestow on humanity its portrait,—some laughing, some weeping, others pensive; these last are the greatest. Plautus laughs, and gives to man Amphitryon; Rabelais laughs, and gives to man Gargantua; Cervantes laughs, and gives to man Don Quixote; Beaumarchais laughs, and gives to man Figaro; Molière weeps, and gives to man Alceste; Shakespeare dreams, and gives to man Hamlet; Æschylus meditates, and gives to man Prometheus. The others are great; Æschylus and Shakespeare are vast.

These portraits of humanity (left to humanity as a last farewell by those passing spirits, the poets) are rarely flattering, always exact,—likenesses of profound resemblance. Vice, or folly, or virtue is extracted from the soul and stamped upon the visage. The tear congealed, becomes a pearl; the smile petrified, at last appears a menace; wrinkles are the furrows of wisdom; certain frowns are tragic. This series of models of man is a permanent lesson for the generations: each century adds in some figures, sometimes done in full light and strong relief, like Macette, Célimène, Tartuffe, Turcaret, and Rameau's Nephew; sometimes simple profiles, like Gil Blas, Manon Lescaut, Clarissa Harlowe, and Candide.

God creates by intuition; man creates by inspiration, strengthened by observation. This second creation, which is nothing else but divine action carried out by man, is what is called 'genius'.

The poet stepping into the place of destiny; an invention of men and events so strange, so true to nature, and so masterly that certain religious sects hold it in horror as an encroachment upon Providence, and call the poet 'the liar'; the conscience of man taken in the act and placed in surroundings which it resists, governs, or transforms: such is the drama. And there is in this something supreme. This handling of the human soul seems a kind of equality with God: equality, the mystery of which is explained when we reflect that God is within man. This equality is identity. Who is our conscience? He; and He counsels right action. Who is our intelligence? He; and He inspires the masterpiece.

God may be there: but this, as we have seen, does not lessen the crabbedness of critics; the greatest minds are the ones most called in question. It even sometimes happens that real intelligences attack genius; the inspired, strangely enough, do not recognize inspiration. Erasmus, Bayle, Scaliger, St Evremond, Voltaire, many of the Fathers of the Church, whole families of philosophers, the whole Alexandrian School, Cicero, Horace, Lucian, Plutarch, Josephus, Dion Chrysostom, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Philostratus, Metrodorus of Lampsacus, Plato, Pythagoras, have severely criticized Homer. In this enumeration we omit Zoïlus. Men who deny are not critics. Hatred is not intelligence. To insult is not to discuss. Zoïlus, Mævius, Cecchi, Green, Avellaneda, William Lauder, Visé, Fréron,—no cleansing of these names is possible. These men have wounded the human race in her men of genius; these wretched hands for ever retain the colour of the mud that they have thrown.

Nor have these men even the miserable renown

that they seem to have amply earned, nor the whole quantity of infamy that they had hoped for. It is scarcely known that they have existed. They are half forgotten, a greater humiliation than to be wholly forgotten. With the exception of two or three among them who have become by-words of contempt, despicable owls nailed up for a warning, all the wretched names are unknown. An obscure notoriety follows their equivocal existence. Look at that Clement who called himself the 'hypercritic', and whose profession it was to bite and denounce Diderot; he disappears, and is confounded, although born at Geneva, with Clement of Dijon, confessor to Mesdames; with David Clement, author of the *Bibliothèque Curieuse*; with Clement of Baize, Benedictine of St. Maur; and with Clement d'Ascain, Capuchin, definitor and provincial of Béarn. What avails it him to have declared that the work of Diderot is but 'obscure verbiage', and to have died mad at Charenton, to be afterward submerged in four or five unknown Clements? In vain did Famien Strada rabidly attack Tacitus: he is scarcely distinguished now from Famien Spada, called 'the Wooden Sword', the jester of Sigismond Augustus. In vain did Cecchi vilify Dante: we are not certain that his name was not Cecco. In vain did Green fasten on Shakespeare: he is now confounded with Greene [1]. Avellaneda, the 'enemy' of Cervantes, is perhaps Avellanedo. Lauder, the slanderer of Milton, is perhaps Louder. The unknown De Visé, who 'smashed' Molière, turns out to be a certain Donneau; he had surnamed himself De Visé through a taste for nobility. Those men relied, in order to create for themselves a little notoriety, on the greatness of those whom they outraged. But no; they have remained obscure. These poor insulters did not get their wages; they are bankrupt of contempt. Let us pity them.

[1] And rightly; for he is indeed the same individual. See note, p. 148. Tr.

CHAPTER II

Let us add that calumny's labour is lost. Then what purpose can it serve? Not even an evil one. Do you know anything more useless than the injurious which does not injure?

Better still. This injury is beneficial. In good time it is found that calumny, envy, and hatred, thinking to work harm, have worked benefit. Their insults bring fame; their blackening adds lustre. They succeed only in mingling with glory an outcry which increases it.

Let us continue.

Thus each great poet tries on in his turn this immense human mask. And such is the strength of the soul which shines through the mysterious aperture of the eyes, that this look changes the mask, and from terrible makes it comic, then pensive, then grieved, then young and smiling, then decrepit, then sensual and gluttonous, then religious, then outrageous; and it is Cain, Job, Atreus, Ajax, Priam, Hecuba, Niobe, Clytemnestra, Nausicaa, Pistoclerus, Grumio, Davus, Pasicompsa, Chimène, Don Arias, Don Diego, Mudarra, Richard III, Lady Macbeth, Desdemona, Juliet, Romeo, Lear, Sancho Panza, Pantagruel, Panurge, Arnolphe, Dandin, Sganarelle, Agnes, Rosine, Victorine, Basile, Almaviva, Cherubin, Manfred.

From the direct divine creation proceeds Adam, the prototype. From the indirect divine creation —that is to say, from the human creation—proceed other Adams, the types.

A type does not reproduce any man in particular; it cannot be exactly superposed upon any individual; it sums up and concentrates under one human form a whole family of characters and minds. A type is no abridgment: it is a condensation. It is not one, it is all. Alcibiades is but Alcibiades, Petronius is but Petronius, Bassompierre is but Bassompierre, Buckingham is but Buckingham, Fronsac is but Fron-

sac, Lauzun is but Lauzun; but take Lauzun, Fronsac, Buckingham, Bassompierre, Petronius, and Alcibiades, and bray them in the mortar of the dream, and there issues from it a phantom more real than them all,—Don Juan. Take usurers individually, and no one of them is that fierce merchant of Venice, crying: 'Go, Tubal, fee me an officer, bespeak him a fortnight before; I will have the heart of him if he forfeit'. Take all the usurers together, from the crowd of them is evolved a total,—Shylock. Sum up usury, you have Shylock. The metaphor of the people, who are never mistaken, confirms unawares the invention of the poet; and while Shakespeare makes Shylock, the popular tongue creates the bloodsucker [1]. Shylock is the embodiment of Jewishness; he is also Judaism,—that is to say, his whole nation, the high as well as the low, faith as well as fraud; and it is because he sums up a whole race, such as oppression has made it, that Shylock is great. The Jews are, however, right in saying that none of them—not even the mediæval Jew—is Shylock. Men of pleasure may with reason say that no one of them is Don Juan. No leaf of the orange-tree when chewed gives the flavour of the orange; yet there is a deep affinity, an identity of roots, a sap rising from the same source, a sharing of the same subterranean shadow before life. The fruit contains the mystery of the tree, and the type contains the mystery of the man. Hence the strange vitality of the type.

For—and this is the marvel—the type lives. Were it but an abstraction, men would not recognize it, and would allow this shadow to go its way. The tragedy termed 'classic' makes phantoms; the drama creates living types. A lesson which is a man; a myth with a human face so plastic that it looks at you and that its look is a mirror; a parable which nudges you; a symbol which cries out 'Beware!' an idea which is nerve, muscle, and flesh,—which has a heart to love,

[1] *Happe-chair*; literally, 'grab-flesh'. Tr.

bowels to suffer, eyes to weep, and teeth to devour or to laugh; a psychical conception with the relief of actual fact, which, if it be pricked, bleeds red,—such is the type. O power of all poetry! These types are beings. They breathe, they palpitate, their steps are heard on the floor, they exist. They exist with an existence more intense than that of any creature thinking himself alive there in the street. These phantoms are more substantial than man. In their essence is that eternal element which belongs to masterworks, which makes Trimalchio live, while M. Romieu is dead.

Types are cases foreseen of God; genius realizes them. It seems that God prefers to teach man a lesson through man, in order to inspire confidence. The poet walks the street with living men; he has their ear. Hence the efficacy of types. Man is a premise, the type the conclusion; God creates the phenomenon, genius gives it a name; God creates the miser only, genius forms Harpagon; God creates the traitor only, genius makes Iago; God creates the coquette, genius makes Célimène; God creates the citizen only, genius makes Chrysale; God creates the king only, genius makes Grandgousier. Sometimes, at a given moment, the type issues full-grown from some unknown collaboration of the mass of the people with a great natural actor, an involuntary and powerful realizer; the crowd is a midwife; in an epoch which bears at one extreme Talleyrand, and at another Chodruc-Duclos, there springs up suddenly, in a flash of lightning, under the mysterious incubation of the theatre, that spectre Robert Macaire [1].

Types go and come on a common level in Art and in Nature; they are the ideal realized. The good and the evil of man are in these figures. From each of them springs, in the eyes of the thinker, a humanity.

[1] For an entertaining account of Chodruc-Duclos, by Dr Holmes, see *The Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1886, pp. 12, 13. TR.

As we have said before, as many types, as many Adams. The man of Homer, Achilles, is an Adam: from him comes the species of the slayers; the man of Æschylus, Prometheus, is an Adam: from him comes the race of the wrestlers; the man of Shakespeare, Hamlet, is an Adam: to him belongs the family of the dreamers. Other Adams, created by poets, incarnate,—this one, passion; another, duty; another, reason; another, conscience; another, the fall; another, the ascension.

Prudence, drifting into trepidation, passes from the old man Nestor to the old man Géronte. Love, drifting into appetite, passes from Daphne to Lovelace. Beauty, entwined with the serpent, passes from Eve to Melusina. The types begin in Genesis, and a link of their chain passes through Restif de la Bretonne and Vadé. The lyric suits them,—Billingsgate does not misbecome them. They speak a country dialect by the mouth of Gros-René, and in Homer they say to Minerva, who takes them by the hair: 'What wouldst thou with me, Goddess?'

A surprising exception has been conceded to Dante. The man of Dante is Dante. Dante has, so to speak, recreated himself in his poem: he is his own type; his Adam is himself. For the action of his poem he has sought out no one. He has taken Virgil only as a supernumerary. Moreover, he made himself epic at once, without even giving himself the trouble to change his name. What he had to do was in fact simple,—to descend into hell, and remount to heaven. What use was it to trouble himself for so little? He knocks gravely at the door of the Infinite and says: 'Open! I am Dante.'

CHAPTER III

The man of Æschylus, Prometheus, and the man of Shakespeare, Hamlet, are, as we have just said,—two marvellous Adams.

Prometheus is action; Hamlet is hesitation.

In Prometheus the obstacle is exterior; in Hamlet it is interior.

In Prometheus the four limbs of incarnate Will are nailed down with brazen spikes, and cannot move: besides, it has by its side two watchers, Force and Power. In Hamlet the Will is still more enthralled: it is bound by preliminary meditation, the endless chain of the irresolute. Try to get out of yourself if you can! What a Gordian knot is our reverie! Slavery from within, is slavery indeed. Scale me the barricade of thought! escape, if you can, from the prison of love! The only dungeon is that which immures the conscience. Prometheus, in order to be free, has but a bronze collar to break and a god to conquer; Hamlet must break and conquer himself. Prometheus can rise upright, quit with lifting a mountain; in order that Hamlet may stand erect, he must lift his own thought. If Prometheus plucks the vulture from his breast, all is done; Hamlet must rend from his flank Hamlet. Prometheus and Hamlet are two livers laid bare: from the one trickles blood, from the other doubt.

We are in the habit of comparing Æschylus and Shakespeare by Orestes and Hamlet, these two tragedies being the same drama. Never in fact was there more identity of subject. The learned note an analogy between them; the impotent, who are also the ignorant, the envious, who are also the imbecile, have the petty joy of thinking they detect a plagiarism. There is here, for the rest, a possible field for comparative erudition and for serious criticism. Hamlet walks behind Orestes, a parricide through filial love. This easy comparison, rather superficial than substantial, is less striking than the mysterious confrontment of those two captives, Prometheus and Hamlet.

Let it not be forgotten that the human mind, half divine as it is, creates from time to time superhuman

works. Furthermore, these superhuman works of man are more numerous than is believed, for they make up the whole of art. Outside of poetry, where wonders abound, there is, in music, Beethoven; in sculpture, Phidias; in architecture, Piranesi; in painting, Rembrandt; and in painting, architecture, and sculpture, Michael Angelo. We pass over many, and not the least.

Prometheus and Hamlet are among these more than human works.

A kind of gigantic prepossession: the usual measure exceeded; greatness everywhere,—the dismay of commonplace minds; the true demonstrated, when necessary, by the improbable; destiny, society, law, religion, brought to trial and judgment in the name of the Unknown, the abyss of the mysterious equilibrium; the event treated as a *rôle* to be played, and, on occasion, hurled as a reproach against Fatality or Providence; Passion, terrible personage, going and coming in man; the audacity and sometimes the insolence of reason; the haughty forms of a style at ease in all extremes, and at the same time a profound wisdom; the gentleness of the giant, the good nature of a softened monster; an ineffable dawn which cannot be accounted for and which lights up everything: such are the signs of these supreme works. In certain poems there is starlight.

This light is in Æschylus and in Shakespeare.

CHAPTER IV

Nothing can be more fiercely wild than Prometheus stretched on the Caucasus. It is gigantic tragedy. The old punishment which our ancient laws of torture called 'extension', and which Cartouche escaped because of a hernia,—this, Prometheus undergoes; only the rack is a mountain. What is his crime? The Right. To characterize right as crime, and movement as rebellion, is the immemorial skill of

tyrants. Prometheus has done on Olympus what Eve did in Eden,—he has taken a little knowledge. Jupiter—identical, indeed, with Jehovah (*Iovi, Iova*)—punishes this temerity of having desired to live. The Æginetic traditions, which localize Jupiter, deprive him of the cosmic impersonality of the Jehovah of Genesis. The Greek Jupiter—bad son of a bad father, in rebellion against Saturn, who has himself been a rebel against Cœlus,—is an upstart. The Titans are a sort of elder branch which has its legitimists, of whom Æschylus, the avenger of Prometheus, was one. Prometheus is the right conquered. Jupiter has, as is always the case, consummated the usurpation of power by the punishment of right. Olympus claims the aid of Caucasus. Prometheus is fastened there by the brazen collar. There is the Titan, fallen, prostrate, nailed down. Mercury, everybody's friend, comes to give him such counsel as generally follows the perpetration of *coups d' état*. Mercury is the cowardice of intelligence; the embodiment of all possible vice, but full of cleverness: Mercury, the god Vice, serves Jupiter, the god Crime. These flunkeys in evil are marked to this day by the veneration of the thief for the assassin. There is something of that law in the arrival of the diplomatist behind the conqueror. The masterworks are immense in this,—that they are eternally present at the deeds of humanity. Prometheus on the Caucasus, is Poland after 1772; France after 1815; the Revolution after Brumaire. Mercury speaks; Prometheus listens but little. Offers of amnesty miscarry when it is the victim alone who should have the right to grant pardon. Prometheus, thrown to earth, scorns Mercury standing proudly above him, and Jupiter standing above Mercury, and Destiny standing above Jupiter. Prometheus jests at the vulture which gnaws at him; he disdainfully shrugs his shoulders as much as his chain allows. What does he care for Jupiter, and of what good is Mercury? There is no hold upon

this haughty sufferer. The scorching thunderbolt causes a smart, which is a constant appeal to pride. Meanwhile tears flow around him, the earth despairs, the cloud-women—the fifty Oceanides—come to worship the Titan, forests cry aloud, wild beasts groan, winds howl, waves sob, the elements moan, the world suffers in Prometheus,—his brazen collar chokes the universal life. An immense participation in the torture of the demigod seems to be henceforth the tragic delight of all Nature ; anxiety for the future mingles with it: and what is to be done now ? How are we to move ? What will become of us ? And in the vast whole of created beings, things, men, animals, plants, rocks, all turned toward the Caucasus, is felt this unspeakable anguish: the liberator is enchained.

Hamlet, less gigantic and more human, is not less great.

Hamlet, that awful being complete in incompleteness ; all, in order to be nothing ! He is prince and demagogue, sagacious and extravagant, profound and frivolous, man and neuter. He has little faith in the sceptre, rails at the throne, has a student for his comrade, converses with any one passing by, argues with the first comer, understands the people, despises the mob, hates violence, distrusts success, questions obscurity, and is on speaking terms with mystery. He communicates to others maladies that he has not himself; his feigned madness inoculates his mistress with real madness. He is familiar with spectres and with actors. He jests, with the axe of Orestes in his hand. He talks literature, recites verses, composes a theatrical criticism, plays with bones in a churchyard, dumfounds his mother, avenges his father, and closes the dread drama of life and death with a gigantic point of interrogation. He terrifies, and then disconcerts. Never has anything more overwhelming been dreamed. It is the parricide saying, 'What do I know ?'

Parricide? Let us pause upon that word. Is Hamlet a parricide? Yes, and no. He confines himself to threatening his mother; but the threat is so fierce that the mother shudders. 'Thy word is a dagger! . . . What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me? Help! help! ho!'—and when she dies, Hamlet, without grieving for her, strikes Claudius with the tragic cry: 'Follow my mother!' Hamlet is that sinister thing, the possible parricide [1].

Instead of the North, which he has in his brain, let him have, like Orestes, the South in his veins, and he will kill his mother.

This drama is stern. In it truth doubts, sincerity lies. Nothing can be vaster, nothing subtler. In it man is the world, and the world is zero. Hamlet, even in full life, is not sure of his existence. In this tragedy—which is at the same time a philosophy—everything floats, hesitates, shuffles, staggers, becomes discomposed, scatters, and is dispersed. Thought is a cloud, will is a vapour, resolution a twilight; the action blows every moment from a different direction: the mariner's card governs man. A work which disturbs and makes dizzy; in which the bottom of everything is laid bare; where the pendulum of thought oscillates only from the murdered king to buried Yorick; and where that which is most real is kingliness impersonated in a ghost, and mirth represented by a death's-head.

Hamlet is the supreme tragedy of the human dream.

CHAPTER V

One of the probable causes of the feigned madness of Hamlet has not been, up to the present time, indicated by critics. It has been said, 'Hamlet acts the madman to hide his thought, like Brutus'. In fact, it is easy for apparent imbecility to hatch a

[1] The quotation from *Hamlet* is left in the exact form that Hugo gave it. Tr.

great project; the supposed idiot can take aim deliberately. But the case of Brutus is not that of Hamlet. Hamlet acts the madman for his safety. Brutus screens his project, Hamlet his person. Given the manners of those tragic courts, from the moment that, through the revelation of the ghost, Hamlet is acquainted with the crime of Claudius, he is in danger. The superior historian within the poet is manifested, and one feels the deep insight of Shakespeare into the darkness of the ancient royalty. In the Middle Ages and in the Eastern Empire, and even at earlier periods, woe unto him who found out a murder or a poisoning committed by a king! Ovid, according to Voltaire's conjecture, was exiled from Rome for having seen something shameful in the house of Augustus. To know that the King was an assassin was a state crime. When it pleased the prince not to have had a witness, it was a matter of life and death to know nothing; it was bad policy to have good eyes. A man suspected of suspicion was lost. He had but one refuge,—madness; to pass for 'an innocent': he was despised, and that was all. You remember the advice that, in Æschylus, the Ocean gives to Prometheus: 'To seem mad is the secret of the sage'. When the Chamberlain Hugolin found the iron spit with which Edric of Mercia [1] had impaled Edmund II, 'he hastened to put on madness', says the Saxon chronicle of 1016, and saved himself in that way. Heraclides of Nisibis, having discovered by chance that Rhinometer was a fratricide, had himself declared insane by the doctors, and succeeded in getting himself shut up for life in a cloister. He thus lived peaceably, growing old, and waiting for death with a vacant stare. Hamlet runs the same risk, and has recourse to the same means.

[1] Freeman says: 'The chronicles are silent as to the manner of Eadmund's death.' *Norman Conquest*, i. 470. The reality of the murder is very doubtful. The story of Hugolin is not mentioned by Freeman. Tr.

He gets himself declared insane like Heraclides, and puts on madness like Hugolin. This does not prevent the uneasy Claudius from twice making an effort to get rid of him,—in the middle of the drama by the axe or the dagger, and toward the end by poison.

The same indication is again found in *King Lear*: the Earl of Gloucester's son takes refuge also in apparent lunacy. Herein is a key to open and understand Shakespeare's thought. To the eyes of the philosophy of Art, the feigned madness of Edgar throws light upon the feigned madness of Hamlet.

The Hamblet of Belleforest is a magician; the Hamlet of Shakespeare is a philosopher. We just now spoke of the singular reality which characterizes poetical creations. There is no more striking example than this type, Hamlet. Hamlet is not in the least an abstraction. He has been at the university; he has the Danish savageness softened by the Italian politeness; he is short, plump, somewhat lymphatic; he fences well, but is soon out of breath. He does not care to drink too soon during the fencing-bout with Laertes, probably for fear of sweating. After having thus supplied his personage with real life, the poet can launch him into the full ideal; there is ballast enough.

Other works of the human mind equal *Hamlet*; none surpasses it. There is in *Hamlet* all the majesty of the mournful. A drama issuing from an open sepulchre,—this is colossal. *Hamlet* is to our mind Shakespeare's capital work.

No figure among those that poets have created is more poignant and more disquieting. Doubt counselled by a ghost,—such is Hamlet. Hamlet has seen his dead father and has spoken to him.

Is he convinced? No; he shakes his head. What shall he do? He does not know. His hands clench, then fall by his side. Within him are conjectures, systems, monstrous apparitions, bloody recollections, veneration for the ghost, hate, tenderness, anxiety

to act and not to act, his father, his mother, conflicting duties,—a profound storm. His mind is occupied with ghastly hesitation. Shakespeare, wonderful plastic poet, makes the grandiose pallor of this soul almost visible. Like the great spectre of Albrecht Dürer, Hamlet might be named 'Melancholia'. Above his head, too, there flits the disembowelled bat: at his feet are science, the sphere, the compass, the hour-glass, love; and behind him, at the horizon, a great and terrible sun, which seems to make the sky but darker.

Nevertheless, at least one half of Hamlet is anger, transport, outrage, hurricane, sarcasm to Ophelia, malediction on his mother, insult to himself. He talks with the grave-diggers, almost laughs, then clutches Laertes by the hair in the very grave of Ophelia, and tramples furiously upon that coffin. Sword-thrusts at Polonius, sword-thrusts at Laertes, sword-thrusts at Claudius. At times his inaction gapes open, and from the rent, thunderbolts flash out.

He is tormented by that possible life, interwoven of reality and dream, concerning which we are all anxious. Somnambulism is diffused through all his actions. One might almost consider his brain as a formation: there is a layer of suffering, a layer of thought, then a layer of dream. It is through this layer of dream that he feels, comprehends, learns, perceives, drinks, eats, frets, mocks, weeps, and reasons. There is between life and him a transparency,—the wall of dreams; one sees beyond it, but one cannot step over it. A kind of cloudy obstacle everywhere surrounds Hamlet. Have you never, while sleeping, had the nightmare of pursuit or flight, and tried to hasten on, and felt the anchylosis of your knees, the heaviness of your arms, the horrible paralysis of your benumbed hands? This nightmare Hamlet suffers while awake. Hamlet is not upon the spot where his life is. He has ever the air

of a man who talks to you from the other side of a stream. He calls to you at the same time that he questions you. He is at a distance from the catastrophe in which he moves, from the passer-by he questions, from the thought he bears, from the action he performs. He seems not to touch even what he crushes. This is isolation carried to its highest power. It is the loneliness of a mind, even more than the unapproachableness of a prince. Indecision is, in fact, a solitude; you have not even your will to keep you company. It is as if your own self had departed and had left you there. The burden of Hamlet is less rigid than that of Orestes; it fits patter to his form: Orestes bears fatality, Hamlet destiny.

And thus, apart from men, Hamlet still has within him an undefined something which represents them all. *Agnosco fratrem.* If at certain hours we felt our own pulse, we should be conscious of his fever. His strange reality is our own reality, after all. He is the mournful man that we all are in certain situations. Unhealthy as he is, Hamlet expresses a permanent condition of man. He represents the discomfort of the soul in a life unsuited to it. He represents the shoe that pinches and stops our walking: this shoe is the body. Shakespeare delivers him from it, and rightly. Hamlet—prince if you like, but king never—is incapable of governing a people, so wholly apart from all does he exist. On the other hand, he does better than to reign; he *is*. Take from him his family, his country, his ghost, the whole adventure at Elsinore, and even in the form of an inactive type he remains strangely terrible. This results from the amount of humanity and the amount of mystery in him. Hamlet is formidable,—which does not prevent his being ironical. He has the two profiles of destiny.

Let us retract a word said above. The capital work of Shakespeare is not *Hamlet*: the capital work of Shakespeare is all Shakespeare. This is, moreover, true of all minds of this order. They

are mass, block, majesty, bible; and their unity is what renders them impressive.

Have you never gazed upon a beclouded headland running out beyond eye-shot into the deep sea? Each of its hills contributes to its make-up. No one of its undulations is lost upon it. Its bold outline is sharply marked upon the sky, and juts far out amid the waves; and there is not a useless rock. Thanks to this cape, you can go amidst the boundless waters, walk among the winds, see closely the eagles soar and the monsters swim, let your humanity wander in the eternal uproar, penetrate the impenetrable. The poet renders this service to your mind. A genius is a headland into the infinite.

CHAPTER VI

With *Hamlet*, and upon the same level, must be placed three noble dramas,—*Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*.

Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Lear—these four figures tower upon the lofty edifice of Shakespeare. We have said what Hamlet is.

To say 'Macbeth is ambition', is to say nothing. Macbeth is hunger. What hunger? The hunger of the monster, always possible in man. Certain souls have teeth. Do not arouse their hunger.

To bite at the apple is a fearful thing. The apple is named 'Omnia', says Filesac, that doctor of the Sorbonne who confessed Ravaillac. Macbeth has a wife whom the chronicle calls Gruoch. This Eve tempts this Adam. Once Macbeth has taken the first bite, he is lost. The first thing that Adam produces with Eve is Cain; the first thing that Macbeth accomplishes with Gruoch is murder.

Covetousness easily becoming violence, violence easily becoming crime, crime easily becoming madness: this progression is in Macbeth. Covetousness, Crime, Madness—these three night-hags have spoken

to him in the solitude, and have invited him to the throne. The cat Gray-malkin has called him: Macbeth will be cunning; the toad Paddock has called him: Macbeth will be horror. The unsexed being, Gruoch, completes him. It is done; Macbeth is no longer a man. He is no longer anything but an unconscious energy rushing wildly toward evil. Henceforth, no notion of right; appetite is everything. The transitory right of royalty, the eternal right of hospitality—Macbeth murders both. He does more than slay them: he ignores them. Before they fell bleeding under his hand, they already lay dead within his soul. Macbeth begins by this parricide,—the murder of Duncan, his guest; a crime so terrible that, as a consequence, in the night when their master is stabbed, the horses of Duncan become wild again. The first step taken, the ground begins to crumble; it is the avalanche. Macbeth rolls headlong; he is precipitated; he falls and rebounds from one crime to another, ever deeper and deeper. He undergoes the mournful gravitation of matter invading the soul. He is a thing that destroys. He is a stone of ruin, a flame of war, a beast of prey, a scourge. He marches over all Scotland, king as he is, his bare-legged kernes and his heavily armed gallow-glasses slaughtering, pillaging, massacring. He decimates the thanes, he murders Banquo, he murders all the Macduffs except the one that shall slay him, he murders the nobility, he murders the people, he murders his country, he murders 'sleep'. At length the catastrophe arrives,—the forest of Birnam moves against him. Macbeth has infringed all, overstepped all, destroyed all, violated all; and this desperation ends in arousing even Nature. Nature loses patience, Nature enters into action against Macbeth, Nature becomes soul against the man who has become brute force."

This drama has epic proportions. Macbeth represents that frightful hungry creature who prowls

throughout history—in the forest called brigand, and on the throne, conqueror. The ancestor of Macbeth is Nimrod. These men of force, are they for ever furious? Let us be just; no. They have a goal, which being attained, they stop. Give to Alexander, to Cyrus, to Sesostris, to Cæsar—what? —the world; they are appeased. Geoffrey St. Hilaire said to me one day: 'When the lion has eaten, he is at peace with Nature'. For Cambyses, Sennacherib, Genghis Khan, and the like, to have eaten is to possess the whole earth. They would calm themselves down in the process of digesting the human race.

Now what is Othello? He is the night. An immense fatal figure. Night is amorous of day. Darkness loves the dawn. The African adores the white woman. Othello has for his light and for his frenzy, Desdemona. And then, how easy to him is jealousy! He is great, he is dignified, he is majestic, he soars above all heads: he has as an escort bravery, battle, the braying of trumpets, the banners of war, renown, glory; he is radiant with twenty victories, he is studded with stars, this Othello: but he is black. And thus how soon, when jealous, the hero becomes the monster, the black becomes the negro! How speedily has night beckoned to death!

By the side of Othello, who is night, there is Iago, who is evil—evil, the other form of darkness. Night is but the night of the world; evil is the night of the soul. How deeply black are perfidy and falsehood! It is all one whether what courses through the veins be ink or treason. Whoever has jostled against imposture and perjury, knows it: one must blindly grope one's way with knavery. Pour hypocrisy upon the break of day, and you put out the sun; and this, thanks to false religions, is what happens to God.

Iago near Othello is the precipice near the landslip. 'This way!' he says in a low voice. The snare

advises blindness. The lover of darkness guides the black. Deceit takes upon itself to give what light may be required by night. Falsehood serves as a blind man's dog to jealousy. Othello the negro and Iago the traitor pitted against whiteness and candour; what more formidable? These ferocities of darkness act in unison. These two incarnations of the eclipse conspire, the one roaring, the other sneering, for the tragic suffocation of light.

Sound this profound thing. Othello is the night, and being night, and wishing to kill, what does he take to slay with? Poison? the club? the axe? the knife? No; the pillow. To kill is to lull to sleep. Shakespeare himself perhaps did not take this into account. The creator sometimes, almost unknown to himself, yields to his type, so truly is that type a power. And it is thus that Desdemona, spouse of the Man Night, dies, stifled by the pillow upon which the first kiss was given, and which receives the last sigh.

Lear is the occasion for Cordelia. Maternity of the daughter toward the father. Profound subject! A maternity venerable among all other maternities, so admirably translated by the legend of that Roman girl who in the depth of a prison nurses her old father. The young breast near the white beard: there is no holier sight! Such a filial breast is Cordelia!

Once this figure dreamed of and found, Shakespeare created his drama. Where should he put this consoling vision? In an obscure age. Shakespeare has taken the year of the world 3105, the time when Joash was king of Judah, Aganippus king of France, and Leir king of England. The whole earth was at that time mysterious. Picture to yourself that epoch. The temple of Jerusalem is still quite new; the gardens of Semiramis, constructed nine hundred years before, are beginning to crumble; the first gold coin appears in Ægina; the first balance is made by Phydon, tyrant of Argos;

the eclipse of the sun is calculated by the Chinese; three hundred and twelve years have passed since Orestes, accused by the Eumenides before the Areopagus, was acquitted; Hesiod is just dead; Homer, if he still lives, is a hundred years old; Lycurgus, thoughtful traveller, re-enters Sparta; and one may perceive in the depth of the sombre cloud of the Orient the chariot of fire which carries Elijah away: it is at that period that Leir—Lear—lives, and reigns over the dark islands. Jonas, Holofernes, Draco, Solon, Thespis, Nebuchadnezzar, Anaximenes who is to invent the signs of the zodiac, Cyrus, Zorobabel, Tarquin, Pythagoras, Æschylus, are not yet born; Coriolanus, Xerxes, Cincinnatus, Pericles, Socrates, Brennus, Aristotle, Timoleon, Demosthenes, Alexander, Epicurus, Hannibal, are ghosts awaiting their hour to enter among men; Judas Maccabæus, Viriatus, Popilius, Jugurtha, Mithridates, Marius and Sylla, Cæsar and Pompey, Cleopatra and Antony, are far away in the future; and at the moment when Lear is king of Britain and of Iceland, there must pass away eight hundred and ninety-five years before Virgil says, 'Penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos', and nine hundred and fifty years before Seneca says 'Ultima Thule'. The Picts and the Celts (the Scotch and the English) are tattooed. A redskin of the present day gives a vague idea of an Englishman then [1]. It is this twilight that Shakespeare has chosen,—a long, dreamy night in which the inventor is free to put anything he likes: this King Lear, and then a king of France, a duke of Burgundy, a duke of Cornwall, a duke of Albany, an earl of Kent, and an earl of Gloucester. What matters your history to him who has humanity? Besides, he has with him the legend, which is also a kind of science, and as true as history, perhaps, although from another point of view. Shake-

[1] Victor Hugo is responsible for the words 'English' and 'Englishman', instead of 'British' and 'Briton.' Tr.

speare agrees with Walter Mapes, archdeacon of Oxford,—that is something; he admits, from Brutus to Cadwalla, the ninety-nine Celtic kings who have preceded the Scandinavian Hengist and the Saxon Horsa: and since he believes in Mulmutius, Cinigisil, Ceolulf, Cassibelan, Cymbeline, Cynulphus, Arviragus. Guiderius, Escuin, Cudred, Vortigern, Arthur, Uther Pendragon, he has every right to believe in King Lear and to create Cordelia. This site adopted, the place for the scene marked out, the foundation laid deep, he takes all in hand and builds his work,—unheard-of edifice. He takes tyranny, of which at a later period he will make weakness,—Lear; he takes treason,—Edmund; he takes devotion,—Kent; he takes Ingratitude, which begins with a caress, and he gives to this monster two heads,—Goneril, whom the legend calls Govnerille, and Regan, whom the legend calls Ragaü [1]; he takes paternity; he takes royalty; he takes feudality; he takes ambition; he takes madness, which he divides, and he places face to face three madmen—the King's buffoon, madman by trade; Edgar of Gloucester, mad for prudence' sake; the King, mad through misery. It is at the summit of this tragic pile that he sets the bending form of Cordelia.

There are some formidable cathedral towers,—as, for instance, the Giralda of Seville,—which seem made all complete, with their spirals, their staircases, their sculptures, their cellars, their cæcums, their aërial cells, their sounding chambers, their bells, their wailing, and their mass and their spire, and all their vastness, in order to support at their summit an angel spreading its golden wings. Such is the drama, *King Lear*.

The father is the pretext for the daughter. That admirable human creature, Lear, serves, as a support

[1] In Holinshed's Chronicle, Shakespeare's source, the names are, Gonorilla, Regan, and Cordeilla; in Layamon's 'Brut', Gornoille, Regan, and Cordoille or Gordoylle. Tr.

to this ineffable divine creation, Cordelia. All that chaos of crimes, vices, manias, and miseries, finds its justification in this shining vision of virtue. Shakespeare, bearing Cordelia in his brain, in creating this tragedy was like a god who, having an Aurora to establish, should make a world to put her in.

And what a figure is that father! What a caryatid! It is man stooping. He does nothing but shift his burdens for others that are heavier. The more the old man becomes enfeebled, the more his load augments. He lives under an over-burden. He bears at first power, then ingratitude, then isolation, then despair, then hunger and thirst, then madness, then all Nature. Clouds overcast him, forests heap their shadow upon him, the hurricane swoops down upon the nape of his neck, the tempest makes his mantle heavy as lead, the rain weighs upon his shoulders, he walks bent and haggard as if he had the two knees of Night upon his back. Dismayed and yet colossal, he flings to the winds and to the hail this epic cry: 'Why do ye hate me, tempests? Why do ye persecute me? *Ye are not my daughters*'[1]. And then all is over; the light is extinguished; Reason loses courage, and leaves him; Lear is in his dotage. This old man, being childish, requires a mother. His daughter appears, his only daughter, Cordelia. For the two others, Regan and Goneril, are no longer his daughters, —save so far as to entitle them to the name of parricides.

Cordelia approaches,—'Sir, do you know me?' 'You are a spirit, I know', replies the old man, with the sublime clairvoyance of frenzy. From this moment the filial nursing begins. Cordelia applies herself to nursing this old despairing soul, dying of inanition in hatred. Cordelia nourishes Lear with love, and

[1] Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
You owe me no subscription.
Act iii, scene ii.

his courage revives: she nourishes him with respect, and the smile returns; she nourishes him with hope, and confidence is restored; she nourishes him with wisdom, and reason awakens. Lear, convalescent, rises again, and step by step returns again to life; the child becomes again an old man, the old man becomes a man again. And behold him happy, this wretched one! It is upon this expansion of happiness that the catastrophe is hurled down. Alas! there are traitors, there are perjurers, there are murderers. Cordelia dies. Nothing more heart-rending than this. The old man is stunned; he no longer understands anything; and, embracing her corpse, he expires. He dies upon his daughter's breast. He is saved from the supreme despair of remaining behind her among the living, a poor shadow, to feel the place in his heart empty, and to seek for his soul, carried away by that sweet being who is departed. O God! those whom Thou lovest Thou takest away.

To live after the flight of the angel; to be the father orphaned of his child; to be the eye that no longer has light; to be the deadened heart that knows no more joy; from time to time to stretch the hands into obscurity and try to reclasp a being who was there (where, then, can she be?); to feel himself forgotten in that departure; to have lost all reason for being here below; to be henceforth a man who goes to and fro before a sepulchre, not received, not admitted,—this is indeed a gloomy destiny. Thou hast done well, poet, to kill this old man [1].

[1] Perhaps the reader will pardon, in view of the remarkable parallelism, a reference to Charles Lamb's *Essay on the Tragedies of Shakespeare*, which Victor Hugo probably never saw. 'A happy ending! as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through,—the flaying of his feelings alive,—did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him.' TR.

BOOK III

ZOILUS AS ETERNAL AS HOMER

CHAPTER I

That vulgar flatt'rer of the ignoble herd[1]

THIS line is by La Harpe, who aims it at Shakespeare. Elsewhere La Harpe says: 'Shakespeare panders to the mob.'

Voltaire, as a matter of course, reproaches Shakespeare with antithesis: that is well. And La Beaumelle reproaches Voltaire with antithesis: that is better.

Voltaire, when it is a personal matter with him, *pro domo sua*, gets angry. 'But', he writes, 'this Langlevicl, *alias* La Beaumelle, is an ass. I defy you to find in any poet, in any book, a fine thing which is not an image or an antithesis.'

Voltaire's criticism is double-edged. He wounds and is wounded. This is how he characterizes the Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs: 'Works without order, full of low images and coarse expressions.'

A little while after he exclaims, furious,

The barb'rous Crébillon's preferred to me![2]

An idler of the Œil-de-Bœuf, wearing the red heel and the blue ribbon, a stripling and a marquis,—M. de Créqui,—comes to Ferney, and writes with an air of superiority: 'I have seen Voltaire, that old dotard.'

That the unjust should receive a counterstroke from injustice, is nothing more than right; and

[1] Ce courtisan grossier du profane vulgaire.
[2] On m'ose préférer Crébillon le barbare!

Voltaire gets what he deserves. But to throw stones at men of genius is a general law, and all have to bear it. To be insulted is, it seems, a coronation.

For Salmasius, Æschylus is nothing but farrago [1]. Quintilian understands nothing of *The Oresteia*. Sophocles mildly scorned Æschylus. 'When he does well, he does not know it', said Sophocles. Racine rejected everything, except two or three scenes of *The Choephori*, which, by a note in the margin of his copy of Æschylus, he condescended to spare. Fontenelle says in his *Remarks*: 'One does not know what to make of the *Prometheus* of Æschylus. Æschylus is a kind of madman'. The eighteenth century, without exception, ridicules Diderot for admiring *The Eumenides*.

'The whole of Dante is a hotch-potch', says Chaudon. 'Michael Angelo wearies me', says Joseph de Maistre. 'Not one of the eight comedies of Cervantes is tolerable', says La Harpe. 'It is a pity that Molière does not know how to write', says Fénelon. 'Molière is a base mountebank', says Bossuet. 'A schoolboy would have avoided the mistakes of Milton', says the Abbé Trublet,—an authority as good as any other. 'Corneille exaggerates, Shakespeare raves', says Voltaire again,—Voltaire, who must ever be resisted, and ever defended.

'Shakespeare', says Ben Jonson, talked heavily and without any wit'. How prove the contrary? What is written abides; talk passes away. Still, so much stands denied to Shakespeare. That man of genius had no wit: how that flatters the numberless men of wit who have no genius!

Some time before Scudéry called Corneille 'corneille déplumée' (unfeathered carrion-crow), Greene had

[1] The passage in Salmasius is curious, and worth transcribing: 'Unus ejus Agamemnon obscuritate superat quantum est librorum sacrorum cum suis hebraismis et syrianismis et totâ hellenisticâ supellectile vel farragine.' *De Re Hellenisticâ*, p. 38, ep. dedic.

called Shakespeare 'a crow beautified with our feathers'. In 1752 Diderot was sent to the fortress of Vincennes for having published the first volume of the *Encyclopædia*, and the great success of the year was a print sold on the quays which represented a Gray Friar flogging Diderot. Death is always an extenuating circumstance for those guilty of genius; but although Weber is dead, he is ridiculed in Germany, and for thirty-three years a masterpiece has been disposed of by a pun. *Euryanthe* is called the 'Ennuyante' [tedious woman].

D'Alembert hits at one blow Calderon and Shakespeare. He writes to Voltaire [letter cv]: 'I have announced to the Academy your "Heraclius" of Calderon. The Academy will read it with as much pleasure as the harlequinade of Gilles Shakespeare.'

That everything should be perpetually re-examined, that everything should be contested, even the incontestable,—what does it matter? The eclipse is a good test of truth as well as of liberty. Genius, being truth and liberty, has a claim to persecution. What does genius care for what is transient? It has been, and will be again. It is not toward the sun that the eclipse casts a shadow.

Anything admits of being written. Paper is very patient. Last year a grave review printed this: 'Homer is about to go out of fashion'.

The judgment passed on the philosopher, on the artist, on the poet, is completed by the portrait of the man.

Byron killed his tailor; Molière married his own daughter; Shakespeare 'loved' Lord Southampton!

> At last, with their appetites whetted for vices,
> The pit roared for the author, that compound of all.[1]

This compendium of all the vices is Beaumarchais. As for Byron, we mention this name a second time;

[1] Et pour voir à la fin tous les vices ensemble,
Le parterre en tumulte a demandé l'auteur.

he is worth the trouble. Read *Glenarvon*, and listen, on the subject of Byron's abominations, to Lady Bl——, whom he had loved, and who, of course, resented it.

Phidias was a procurer; Socrates was an apostate and a thief, 'a detacher of mantles'; Spinoza was a renegade and a legacy-hunter; Dante was a peculator; Michael Angelo was cudgelled by Julius II, and quietly put up with it for the sake of five hundred crowns; D'Aubigné was a courtier sleeping in the king's closet, ill-tempered when he was not paid, and to whom Henry IV was too kind; Diderot was a libertine; Voltaire a miser; Milton was venal,—he received a thousand pounds sterling for his Latin apology for regicide: 'Defensio pro se'[1], etc. Who says these things? who relates these stories? That good person, your old fawning friend, O tyrants; your old comrade, O traitors; your old auxiliary, O bigots; your old comforter, O imbeciles!—Calumny.

CHAPTER II

Let us add one particular,—diatribe is, upon occasion, a means of government.

Thus in the print of 'Diderot flogged', the hand of the police appeared, and the engraver of the Gray Friar must have been of close kin to the turnkey of Vincennes. Governments, more passionate than is necessary, fail to keep aloof from the animosities of the crowd below. The political persecution of former days—it is of former days that we are speaking—willingly availed itself of a dash of literary persecution. Certainly, hatred hates without being paid for it. Envy, to do its work does not need a minister of state to encourage and pension it, and there is such a thing as unofficial calumny. But a money-bag does no harm. When Roy, the court-poet, rhymed

[1] The work referred to is probably Milton's *Defensio Populi Angelicani*, written by way of reply to Salmasius. Tr.

against Voltaire, 'Tell me, daring stoic', etc., the position of treasurer of the excise office of Clermont, and the cross of St. Michael, were not likely to damp his enthusiasm for the court, and his spirit against Voltaire. A gratuity is pleasant to receive after a service rendered. The masters upstairs smile; you receive the agreeable order to insult some one you detest; you obey amply; you are free to bite *ad libitum;* you take your fill: it is all profit; you hate, and you give satisfaction. Formerly, authority had its scribes. It was a pack of hounds as good as any other. Against the free rebellious spirit, the despot would let loose the scribbler. To torture was not sufficient; teasing was resorted to likewise. Trissotin would hold a confabulation with Vidocq, and from their *tête-à-tête* a complex inspiration would result. Pedantry, thus supported by the police, felt itself an integral part of authority, and strengthened its æsthetics with legal means. It grew haughty. No arrogance is equal to that of the base pedant raised to the dignity of bumbailiff. See, after the struggle between the Arminians and the Gomarists, with what a superb air Sparanus Buyter, his pockets full of Maurice of Nassau's florins, denounces Joost Vondel, and proves, Aristotle in hand, that the Palamedes of Vondel's tragedy is no other than Barneveldt! useful rhetoric, by which Buyter obtains against Vondel a fine of three hundred crowns, and for himself a fat prebend at Dordrecht.

The author of the book, *Literary Quarrels*, the Abbé Irail, canon of Monistrol, asks of La Beaumelle, 'Why do you insult M. de Voltaire so much?' 'It is because it sells well', replies La Beaumelle. And Voltaire, informed of the question and of the reply, concludes: 'Precisely so: the simpleton buys the writing, and the minister buys the writer. It sells well'.

Françoise d'Issembourg de Happoncourt, wife of François Hugo, chamberlain of Lorraine, and

celebrated under the name of Madame de Graffigny, writes to M. Devaux, reader to King Stanislaus: 'My dear Pampan, Atys being sent away (Read: Voltaire being banished), the police cause to be published against him a swarm of small writings and pamphlets, which are sold at a sou in the *cafés* and theatres. That would displease the Marquise[1], if it did not please the King'.

Desfontaines, that other insulter of Voltaire, who had rescued him from the mad-house of Bicêtre, said to the Abbé Prévost, who advised him to make his peace with the philosopher: 'If Algiers did not make war, Algiers would die of hunger'.

This Desfontaines, also an abbé, died of dropsy; and his well-known tastes gained for him this epitaph: 'Periit aqua qui meruit igne'.

Among the publications suppressed in the last century by decree of parliament, is found a document printed by Quinet and Besogne, and destroyed doubtless because of the revelations which it contained, and of which the title gave promise: *The Aretiniad*[2]*; or, Price-list of Libellers and Abusive Men of Letters.*

Madame de Staël, exiled to a distance of forty-five leagues from Paris, stops exactly at the forty-five leagues, at Beaumont-sur-Loire, and thence writes to her friends. Here is a fragment of a letter addressed to Madame Gay, mother of the illustrious Madame de Girardin: 'Ah, dear madame, what a persecution are these exiles!' (We suppress some lines.) 'You write a book; it is forbidden to speak of it. Your name in the journals displeases. Permission is, however, fully given to speak ill of it'.

CHAPTER III

SOMETIMES the diatribe is sprinkled with quicklime.
All these black pen-nibs end by digging dismal pits.

[1] Madame de Pompadour.
[2] From Pietro Aretino, the literary jackal of the sixteenth century. TR.

Among the writers abhorred for having been useful, Voltaire and Rousseau stand in the first rank. Living, they were lacerated; dead, they were mangled. To have a hack at these renowned ones was a splendid deed, and set down as such in the bills of service of literary catchpolls. To insult Voltaire even once, was enough to give one the rank of pedant-laureate. Men of power egged on the men of libel. A swarm of mosquitoes settled upon these two illustrious men, and the insects are still humming.

Voltaire is the more hated, being the greater. Everything was good for an attack on him, everything was a pretext: the princesses of France, Newton, Madame du Châtelet, the Princess of Prussia, Maupertuis, Frederick, the Encyclopædia, the Academy, even Labarre, Sirven, and Calas. Never a truce. His popularity suggested to Joseph de Maistre this line: 'Paris crowned him; Sodom would have banished him.' Arouet was translated into *A rouer*[1]. At the house of the Abbess of Nivelles, Princess of the Holy Empire, half recluse and half worldling—having recourse, it is said, in order to make her cheeks rosy, to the method of the Abbess of Montbazon—charades were played; among others, this one: 'The first syllable is his fortune; the second should be his duty'. The word was Vol-taire[2]. A celebrated member of the Academy of Sciences, Napoleon Bonaparte, seeing in 1803, in the library of the Institute, this inscription in the centre of a crown of laurels, 'To the Great Voltaire', scratched with his nail the last three letters, leaving only 'To the Great Volta!'

Around Voltaire especially there is a sanitary cordon of priests, the Abbé Desfontaines at the head, the Abbé Nicolardot at the tail. Fréron, although a layman, is a critic after the priestly fashion, and belongs to this band.

It was at the Bastile that Voltaire made his *début*.

[1] Deserving of being broken on the wheel. Tr.
[2] *Vol*, 'theft', *taire*, 'to be silent.' Tr.

His cell was next to the dungeon in which Bernard Palissy had died. Young, he tasted the prison; old, he tasted exile. He was kept twenty-seven years away from Paris.

Jean-Jacques, being wild and somewhat solitary, was, in consequence of these traits, hunted about. Paris issued a writ against his person; Geneva expelled him; Neufchâtel rejected him: Motiers-Travers condemned him; Bienne stoned him; Berne gave him the choice between prison and expulsion; London, hospitable London, scoffed at him.

Both died at about the same time [1]. Death caused no interruption to the outrages. A man is dead; insult does not slacken pursuit for such a trifle. Hatred can feast on a corpse. Libels continued, piously rabid against such glory.

The Revolution came, and placed them in the Pantheon.

At the beginning of this century, children were often brought to see these two graves. They were told, 'It is here!' That made a strong impression on their minds. They carried for ever in their thought that vision of two sepulchres side by side: the elliptical arch of the vault, the antique form of the two monuments provisionally covered with wood painted like marble; these two names, ROUSSEAU, VOLTAIRE, in the twilight; and the hand bearing a torch which was thrust out of the tomb of Jean-Jacques.

Louis XVIII returned. The restoration of the Stuarts had torn Cromwell from his grave; the restoration of the Bourbons could not do less for Voltaire.

One night, in May, 1814, about two o'clock in the morning, a cab stopped near the city-gate of La Gare, opposite Bercy, at a door in a board fence. This fence surrounded a large vacant piece of ground, reserved for the projected warehouses, and belonging to the city of Paris. The cab had come from the

[1] Voltaire died May 30, 1778; Rousseau, four days later. TR.

Pantheon, and the coachman had been ordered to take the most deserted streets. The fence-gate was opened. Some men alighted from the cab and entered the inclosure. Two carried a sack between them. They were conducted, so tradition asserts, by the Marquis de Puymaurin, afterward deputy to the Invisible Chamber [1] and Director of the Mint, accompanied by his brother, the Comte de Puymaurin. Other men, some in cassocks, were awaiting them. They proceeded toward a hole dug in the middle of the field. This hole—according to one of the witnesses, who has since been a waiter at the Marronniers inn at La Rapée—was round, and looked like a dry well. At the bottom of the hole was quicklime. These men said nothing, and had no lanterns. The wan daybreak gave a ghastly light. The sack was opened. It was full of bones. These were the intermingled bones of Jean-Jacques and of Voltaire, which had just been withdrawn from the Pantheon. The mouth of the sack was brought close to the hole, and the bones were thrown into that black pit. The two skulls struck against each other; a spark, not likely to be seen by such men as those present, was doubtless exchanged between the head that had made *The Philosophical Dictionary* and the head that had made *The Social Contract*, and reconciled them. When that was done, when the sack had been shaken, when Voltaire and Rousseau had been emptied into that hole, a digger seized a spade, threw into the opening the heap of earth at the side, and filled up the grave. The others stamped with their feet on the ground, so as to remove from it the appearance of having been freshly disturbed; one of the assistants took for his trouble the sack—as the hangman takes the clothing of his victim; they left the inclosure, shut the gate, got into the cab without saying a word, and hastily, before the sun had risen, these men got away.

[1] 'Chambre introuvable', referring to the French Chamber of Deputies of 1815. Tr.

CHAPTER IV

SALMASIUS, that worse Scaliger, does not comprehend Æschylus, and rejects him. Who is to blame? Salmasius much; Æschylus little.

The attentive man who reads great works feels at times, in the midst of his reading, certain sudden chills, followed by a kind of excess of heat—'I no longer understand! . . . I understand!'—shivering and burning, something which causes him to be a little upset at the same time that he is very much struck. Only minds of the first order, only men of supreme genius, subject to absences in the infinite, give to the reader this singular sensation,—stupor for the most, ecstasy for a few. These few are the children of light. As we have already observed, these select few, gathering from century to century, and continually gaining recruits, at last become numerous, and make up the supreme company, the definitive public of genius, and like it, sovereign.

It is with this public that, first or last, one must deal.

Meanwhile there is another public; there are other appraisers, other judges, to whom we have just now given a word. These are not content.

The men of genius, the great minds—this Æschylus, this Isaiah, this Juvenal, this Dante, this Shakespeare—are beings imperious, tumultuous, violent, passionate, hard riders of winged steeds, 'overleaping all boundaries', having their own goal, which itself 'is beyond the mark', 'exaggerated', taking scandalous strides, flying abruptly from one idea to another, and from the North Pole to the South Pole, crossing the heavens in three steps, making little allowance for the scant of breath, shaken by all the winds of space, and at the same time full of some unaccountable equestrian confidence amidst their bounds across the abyss, intractable to the 'Aristarchs', refractory to official rhetoric, not amiable to asthmatic *literati*, unsubdued

to academic hygiene, preferring the foam of Pegasus to ass's-milk.

The worthy pedants are kind enough to fear for them. The ascent occasions a calculation of the fall. Compassionate cripples lament for Shakespeare. He is mad; he mounts too high! The mob of college scouts (they are a mob) look on in wonder, and get angry. Æschylus and Dante make these connoisseurs blink every moment. This Æschylus is lost! This Dante is near falling! A god spreads his wings for flight: the Philistines cry out to him, 'Mind yourself!'

CHAPTER V

Besides, these men of genius are disconcerting.

There is no reckoning with them. Their lyric fury obeys them; they interrupt it when they like. They seem wild. Suddenly they stop. Their frenzy becomes melancholy. They are seen among the precipices, alighting on a peak and folding their wings; and then they give way to meditation. Their meditation is not less surprising than their transport. Just now they were soaring, now they are sinking shafts. But their audacity is ever the same.

They are pensive giants. Their Titanic reverie needs the absolute and the unfathomable for its expansion. They meditate as the suns shine, conditioned by the medium of the abyss around them.

Their roving to and fro in the ideal dizzies the observer. Nothing is too high for them, and nothing too low. They pass from the pigmy to the Cyclops, from Polyphemus to the Myrmidons, from Queen Mab to Caliban, from a love-affair to a deluge, from Saturn's rings to a child's doll. *Sinite parvulos venire.* One of their eyes is a telescope, the other a microscope. They investigate familiarly those two frightful inverse depths—the infinitely great, and the infinitely little.

And one should not be angry with them! and

one should not reproach them for all this! Indeed, what would result if such excesses were to be tolerated? What! No scruple in the choice of subjects, horrible or sad; and the thought, even if it be distressing and formidable, always relentlessly followed up to its extreme consequence! These poets see only their own aim; and in everything they have an immoderate way of doing things. What is Job? A maggot upon a sore. What is the *Divina Commedia?* A series of torments. What is the *Iliad?* A collection of plagues and wounds. Not an artery cut which is not complacently described. Go about for opinions of Homer; ask Scaliger, Terrasson, Lamotte, what they think of him. The fourth of a canto to the shield of Achilles—what want of proportion! He who does not know when to stop, never knew how to write. These poets agitate, disturb, trouble, upset, overwhelm, make everything shiver, break things occasionally here and there; they may do mischief,—the thing is serious! Thus speak the Athenæa, the Sorbonnes, the sworn professors, the societies called 'learned', Salmasius, successor of Scaliger at the University of Leyden, and the Philistines after them—all who represent in literature and art the great party of order. What can be more natural? The cough quarrels with the hurricane.

Those who are poor in wit are joined by those who have too much wit. The sceptics join hands with the simpletons. Men of genius, with few exceptions, are proud and stern; that is in the very marrow of their bones. They have in their company Juvenal, Agrippa d'Aubigné, and Milton; they are prone to harshness; they despise the *panem et circenses;* they seldom grow sociable, and they growl. People do well to rally them in a pleasant way.

Aha, Poet! Aha, Milton! Aha, Juvenal! So you keep up resistance! you perpetuate disinterestedness! you bring together those two firebrands, faith and will, in order to draw flame from them! So

there is something of the Vestal in you, old grumbler! So you have an altar,—your country! you have a tripod,—the ideal! you believe in the rights of man, in emancipation, in the future, in progress, in the beautiful, in the just, in what is great! Take care; you are behindhand! All this virtue is infatuation. You emigrate with honour,—but you emigrate. This heroism is no longer in good form. It no longer suits the spirit of the time. There comes a moment when the sacred fire is no longer fashionable. Poet, you believe in right and truth; you are behind your age. Your very immortality makes you a thing of the past.

So much the worse, without doubt, for those grumbling geniuses accustomed to greatness, and scornful of what is not great. They are slow of movement when honour is at stake; their back is struck with anchylosis for anything like bowing and cringing; when success passes along, deserved or not, but saluted, they have an iron bar stiffening their vertebral column. That is their affair. So much the worse for those antique Romans. They are ready to be relegated to antiquarian museums. To bristle up at every turn may have been all very well in former days; these unkempt manes are no longer worn; lions went out of fashion with the perukes. The French Revolution is nearly seventy-five years old; at that age dotage comes. The people of the present time mean to belong to their day, and even to their minute. Certainly, we find no fault with this. Whatever is, must be; it is quite right that what exists should exist; the forms of public prosperity are diverse; one generation is not bound to imitate another. Cato took example from Phocion; Trimalchio, who is sufficiently unlike either, embodies the idea of independence. You bad-tempered old fellows, you wish us to emancipate ourselves? Let it be so. We disencumber ourselves of the imitation of Timoleon, Thrasea, Artevelde, Thomas More, Hampden. This is our way of emancipating ourselves. You wish

for a revolt—there it is. You wish for an insurrection —we rise up against our rights. We enfranchise ourselves from the solicitudes of freedom. Citizenship is a heavy burden. Rights entangled with obligations are shackles to one who desires mere enjoyment. It is fatiguing to be guided by conscience and truth in all the steps that we take. We mean to walk without leading-strings and without principles. Duty is a chain; we break our shackles. What do you mean by speaking to us of Franklin? Franklin is a rather too servile copy of Aristides. We carry our horror of servility so far as to prefer Grimod de la Reynière. To eat and drink well is an aim in life. Each epoch has its peculiar manner of being free. Feasting is freedom. This way of reasoning is triumphant; to adhere to it is wise. There have been, it is true, epochs when people thought otherwise. In those times the things which were trodden on would sometimes resent it, and would rebel; but that was the ancient fashion, ridiculous now; and tiresome people and croakers must just be allowed to go on affirming that there was a better notion of right, justice, and honour in the paving-stones of yore than in the men of the present.

The rhetoricians, official and officious—we have pointed out already their wonderful sagacity—take strong precautions against men of genius. Men of genius are but slightly academic; what is more, they do not abound in commonplaces. They are lyrists, colourists, enthusiasts, enchanters, possessed, exalted, 'rabid'—we have read the word—beings who, when everybody is small, have a mania for creating great characters; in fact, they have every vice. A doctor has recently discovered that genius is a variety of madness. They are Michael Angelo chiselling giants, Rembrandt painting with a palette all bedaubed with the sun's rays; they are Dante, Rabelais, Shakespeare, —excessive. They bring with them a style of art wild, howling, flaming, dishevelled like the lion and

the comet. Oh, shocking! People are right in forming combinations against them. It is a fortunate circumstance that the 'teetotallers' of eloquence and poetry exist. 'I admire pallor', said a literary Philistine one day—for there is a literary Philistine. Rhetoricians, solicitous on account of the contagions and fevers which are spread by genius, recommend with a lofty wisdom which we have commended, temperance, moderation, 'common sense', the art of keeping within bounds; writers expurgated, trimmed pruned, regulated; the worship of the qualities that the malignant call negative,—continence, abstinence, Joseph, Scipio, the water-drinkers. All this is excellent; only young students must be warned that by following these sage precepts too closely they run the risk of glorifying the chastity of the eunuch. Perhaps I admire Bayard; I admire Origen less.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY statement: Great minds are importunate; it is judicious to restrain them a little.

After all, let us admit it at last, and complete our statement: there is some truth in the reproaches that are hurled at them. This anger is natural. The powerful, the grand, the luminous, are, from a certain point of view, things calculated to offend. To be surpassed is never agreeable; to feel one's own inferiority is to feel a pang. The beautiful exists so truly by itself that it certainly has no need of pride; nevertheless, given human mediocrity, the beautiful humiliates at the same time that it enchants: it seems natural that beauty should be a vase for pride, a brimming vase; so that the pleasure beauty gives is tainted with resentment, and the word 'superb' comes finally to have two senses, one of which breeds distrust of the other. This is the fault of the beautiful, as we have already said. It wearies: a sketch by Piranesi disconcerts you; the hand-grasp of Hercules

bruises you. Greatness is sometimes in the wrong. It is ingenuous, but obstructive. The tempest thinks to sprinkle you: it drowns you; the star thinks to give light: it dazzles, sometimes blinds. The Nile fertilizes, but overflows. Excess does not comport with comfort: the deeps of space form but an inhospitable dwelling-place; the infinite is scarcely tenantable. A cottage is badly situated on the cataract of Niagara, or in the circus of Gavarnie; it is awkward to keep house with these fierce wonders: to frequent them regularly without being overwhelmed, one must be a cretin or a genius.

The dawn itself at times seems to us immoderate: he who looks straight at it, suffers; the eye at certain moments thinks very ill of the sun. Let us not, then, be surprised at the complaints made, at the incessant protests, at the fits of passion and prudence, at the poultices applied by a certain school of criticism, at the chronic ophthalmy of academies and teaching bodies, at the precautions suggested to the reader, at all the curtains drawn and at all the shades set up against genius. Genius is intolerant unawares, because it is genius. What familiarity is possible with Æschylus, with Ezekiel, with Dante?

The self is one's title to egoism. Now, the first thing that those beings do, is to shock the self of every man. Exorbitant in everything, in thoughts, in images, in convictions, in emotions, in passion, in faith, whatever may be the side of yourself to which they address themselves, they disturb it. They overshoot your intelligence; they dazzle the inner eye of imagination; they question and search your conscience; they wrench your deepest sensibilities; they tear your heart-strings; they sweep away your soul.

The infinite that is in them passes from them, and multiplies them, and transfigures them before your eyes every moment, a fearful strain upon the vision! With them, you never know where you are. At every

turn you encounter the unforeseen. You were looking for men only: there come giants who cannot enter your chamber. You expected only an idea: cast down your eyes, for they are the ideal. You expected only eagles: these beings have six wings, they are seraphs. Are they then beyond Nature? Are they lacking in humanity?

Certainly not; and far from that, and quite the reverse. We have already said, and we insist upon it, Nature and humanity are in them more than in any other beings. They are superhuman men, but men. *Homo sum.* This word of a poet sums up all poetry. Saint Paul strikes his breast, and says, 'Peccamus'. Job tells you who he is: 'I am the son of a woman'. They are men. What troubles you is that they are men more than you; they are *too much* men. Where you have but the part, they have the whole; they carry in their vast heart entire humanity, and they are *you* more than yourself; you recognize yourself too much in their work—hence your outcry. To that total of Nature, to that complete humanity, to that clay which is all your flesh, and which is at the same time the whole earth, they add something; and this marvellous reflection of the light of unknown suns completes your terror. They have vistas of revelation; and suddenly, and without crying 'Beware!' at the moment when you least expect it, they burst the cloud, and make in the zenith a gap whence falls a ray lighting up the terrestrial with the celestial. It is quite natural that people should have no great fancy for their company, and no taste for neighbourly intimacy with them.

Whoever has not a soul well attempered by a vigorous education prefers to avoid them. For colossal books there must be athletic readers. To open Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Job, Pindar, Lucretius, and this Alighieri, and this Shakespeare, one must be robust. Let it be owned that commonplace habits, a vulgar

life, the dead calm of the conscience, 'good taste' and 'common sense'—all petty and placid egoism—are disturbed by the portents of the sublime.

Yet, when one plunges in and reads them, nothing is more hospitable for the mind at certain hours than these stern spirits. They suddenly assume a lofty gentleness, as unexpected as the rest. They say to you, 'Come in!' They receive you at home with an archangelic fraternity. They are affectionate, sad, melancholy, consoling. You are suddenly at your ease. You feel yourself loved by them; you almost imagine yourself personally known to them. Their sternness and their pride veil a profound sympathy; if granite had a heart, how deep would its goodness be! Well, genius is granite with goodness. Extreme power goes with great love. They join you in your prayers. Such men know well that God exists. Apply your ear to these giants, and you will hear their hearts beat. Would you believe, love, weep, beat your breast, fall upon your knees, raise your hands to heaven with confidence and serenity? Listen to these poets: they will aid you to rise toward a wholesome and fruitful sorrow; they will make you feel the heavenly use of emotion. Oh, goodness of the strong! Their emotion, which, if they will, can be an earthquake, is at moments so cordial and so gentle that it seems like the rocking of a cradle. They have just quickened within you something which they foster tenderly. There is maternity in genius. Advance a step; a new surprise awaits you: these poets have a grace like that of Aurora herself.

High mountains have upon their slopes all climes, and the great poets all styles. It is sufficient to change the zone. Go up, it is the tempest; descend, the flowers are there. The inner fire accommodates itself to the winter without; the glacier makes an admirable crater; and the lava has no finer outlet than through the snow. A sudden blaze of flame is not strange on a polar summit. This contact of

the extremes is a law in Nature, in which the theatrical strokes of the sublime are exhibited at every moment. A mountain, a genius, both possess an austere majesty. These masses evolve a sort of religious intimidation. Dante is not less precipitous than Etna; Shakespeare's heights equal the steeps of Chimborazo. The summits of the poets are not less cloud-piercing than mountain peaks. There thunders roll; while in the valleys, in passes, in sheltered nooks, at the bottom of cañons, are rivulets, birds, nests, foliage, enchantments, extraordinary floras. Above the frightful arch of the Aveyron, in the middle of the Mer de Glace, there is that paradise, called 'The Garden'—have you seen it? What a freak of Nature! A hot sun, a shade tepid and fresh, a vague exudation of perfumes on the grass-plots, an indescribable month of May perpetually crouching amid precipices. Nothing can be more tender and more exquisite. Such are the poets; such are the Alps. These vast, dreadful heights are marvellous growers of roses and violets. They avail themselves of the dawn and of the dew better than all your meadows and all your hills, whose natural business it is. The April of the plain is flat and vulgar compared with their April, and they have, those immense old mountains, in their wildest ravine, their own charming spring-tide well known to the bees.

BOOK IV

CRITICISM

CHAPTER I

ALL Shakespeare's plays, with the exception of *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*—thirty-four plays out of thirty-six—offer to the observer one peculiarity which seems to have escaped, up to this day, the most eminent commentators and critics; one which is unnoticed by the Schlegels, and even by M. Villemain himself, in his remarkable labours, and of which it is impossible not to speak. It is the double action which traverses the drama and reflects it on a small scale. Beside the tempest in the Atlantic is the tempest in the tea-cup. Thus, Hamlet makes beneath himself a Hamlet; he kills Polonius, father of Laertes,—and there stands Laertes over against him exactly as he stands over against Claudius. There are two fathers to avenge. There might be two ghosts. So, in *King Lear*, side by side and simultaneously, Lear, driven to despair by his daughters Goneril and Regan, and consoled by his daughter Cordelia, is repeated in Gloster, betrayed by his son Edmund and loved by his son Edgar. The idea bifurcated, the idea echoing itself, a lesser drama copying and elbowing the principal drama, the action attended by its moon, —a smaller action like it,—unity cut in two; surely the fact is a strange one. These double actions have been strongly condemned by the few commentators who have pointed them out. In this condemnation we do not sympathize. Do we then approve and accept as good these double actions? By no means. We recognize them, and that is all. The drama of Shakespeare—as we said with all our force as far back

as 1827 [1], in order to discourage all imitation—the drama of Shakespeare is peculiar to Shakespeare; it is a drama inherent in this poet; it is his own essence; it is himself. Thence his originalities, which are absolutely personal; thence his idiosyncrasies, which exist without establishing a law.

These double actions are purely Shakespearean. Neither Æschylus nor Molière would admit them; and we should certainly agree with Æschylus and Molière.

These double actions are, moreover, the sign of the sixteenth century. Each epoch has its own mysterious stamp. The centuries have a signature which they affix to masterpieces, and which it is necessary to know how to decipher and recognize. The signature of the sixteenth century is not that of the eighteenth. The Renascence was a subtle time, a time of reflection. The spirit of the sixteenth century was reflected in a mirror. Every idea of the Renascence has a double compartment. Look at the rood-lofts in the churches. The Renascence, with an exquisite and fantastical art, always makes the Old Testament an adumbration of the New. The double action is there in everything. The symbol explains the personage by repeating his gesture. If, in a low-relief, Jehovah sacrifices his son, he has for a neighbour, in the next low-relief, Abraham sacrificing his son. Jonah passes three days in the whale, and Jesus passes three days in the sepulchre; and the jaws of the monster swallowing Jonah answer to the mouth of hell engulfing Jesus.

The carver of the rood-loft of Fécamp, so stupidly demolished, goes so far as to give for a counterpart to St Joseph—whom? Amphitryon.

These singular parallels constitute one of the habits of the profound and far-sought art of the sixteenth century. Nothing can be more curious in that manner than the use which was made of St Christopher. In

[1] Preface to *Cromwell*.

the Middle Ages and in the sixteenth century, in paintings and sculptures, St Christopher—the good giant martyred by Decius in 250, recorded by the Bollandists and accepted imperturbably by Baillet—is always triple, an opportunity for the triptych. To begin with, there is a first Christ-bearer, a first Christophorus; this is Christopher with the infant Jesus on his shoulders. Next, the Virgin with child is a Christopher, since she carries Christ. Lastly, the cross is a Christopher; it also carries Christ. This treble illustration of the idea is immortalized by Rubens in the cathedral of Antwerp. The twin idea, the triple idea—such is the stamp of the sixteenth century.

Shakespeare, faithful to the spirit of his time, must needs add Laertes avenging his father to Hamlet avenging his father, and cause Hamlet to be pursued by Laertes at the same time that Claudius is pursued by Hamlet; he must needs make the filial piety of Edgar a comment on the filial piety of Cordelia, and bring out in contrast, weighed down by the ingratitude of unnatural children, two wretched fathers, each bereaved of one of the two kinds of light—Lear mad, and Gloster blind.

CHAPTER II

What then? No criticisms? No strictures? You explain everything? Yes. Genius is an entity like Nature, and requires, like Nature, to be accepted purely and simply. A mountain must be accepted as such, or left alone. There are men who would make a criticism on the Himalayas, pebble by pebble. Mount Etna blazes and sputters, throws out its glare, its wrath, its lava, and its ashes; these men take scales and weigh these ashes, pinch by pinch. *Quot libras in monte summo?* Meanwhile genius continues its eruption. Everything in it has its reason for existing. It is because it is. Its shadow is the underside of its light. Its smoke comes from its flame. Its

precipice is the condition of its height. We love this more, and that less; but we remain silent wherever we feel God. We are in the forest; the crossed grain of the tree is its secret. The sap knows what it is doing; the root understands its trade. We take things as they are; we are on good terms with what is excellent, tender, or magnificent; we acquiesce in masterpieces; we do not make use of one to find fault with the other; we do not insist that Phidias should sculpture cathedrals, nor that Pinaigrier should glaze temples. The temple is harmony, the cathedral is mystery; they are two different models of the sublime: we do not claim for the minster the perfection of the Parthenon, nor for the Parthenon the grandeur of the minster.

We are so far whimsical as to be satisfied if a thing is beautiful. We do not reproach for its sting the insect that gives us honey. We renounce our right to criticise the feet of the peacock, the cry of the swan, the plumage of the nightingale, the larva of the butterfly, the thorn of the rose, the odour of the lion, the hide of the elephant, the prattle of the cascade, the pips of the orange, the immobility of the Milky Way, the saltness of the ocean, the spots on the sun, the nakedness of Noah.

The *quandoque bonus dormitat* is permitted to Horace. We raise no objection. What is certain is that Homer would not say this of Horace, he would not take the trouble. But that eagle would find this chattering humming-bird charming enough. I grant it is pleasant to a man to feel himself superior, and to say, 'Homer is puerile, Dante is childish'. The smile accompanying such a remark is rather becoming. Why not crush these poor geniuses a little? To be the Abbé Trublet, and to say, 'Milton is a schoolboy', is agreeable. How witty is the man who finds that Shakespeare has no wit! That man is La Harpe, Delandine, Auger; he is, was, or shall be, an Academician. 'All these great men are full of extravagance, bad

taste, and childishness'. What a fine decision to render! These manners tickle their possessors voluptuously; and, in reality, when they have said, 'This giant is small', they can fancy that they are great. Every man has his own way. As for myself, the writer of these lines, I admire everything, like a fool.

That is why I have written this book.

To admire,—to be an enthusiast,—it has struck me that it was well to give, in our century, this example of folly.

CHAPTER III

Look, therefore, for no criticism. I admire Æschylus, I admire Juvenal, I admire Dante in the mass, in the lump, all. I do not cavil at those great benefactors. What you characterize as a fault, I call accent. I accept, and give thanks. The marvels of the human mind being my inheritance, I claim no exemption from the liabilities of the succession. Pegasus being given to me, I do not look the gift-horse in the mouth. A masterpiece offers me its hospitality: I approach it hat in hand, and I admire the countenance of my host. Gilles Shakespeare,—be it so. I admire Shakespeare, and I admire Gilles. Falstaff is proposed to me,—I accept him, and I admire the 'Empty the jorden.' I admire the senseless cry, 'A rat!' I admire the quips of Hamlet; I admire the wholesale murders of Macbeth: I admire the witches, 'that ridiculous spectacle'; I admire 'the buttock of the night'; I admire the eye plucked from Gloucester. I have no more intelligence than that comes to.

Having recently had the honour to be called 'silly' by several distinguished writers and critics, and even by my illustrious friend M. de Lamartine [1], I am determined to justify the epithet.

[1] 'The whole biography, sometimes rather puerile even rather silly, of Bishop Myriel.' Lamartine: *Course in Literature* (*Discourse lxxxiv, p.* 385.

We close with a final observation of detail which we have specially to make regarding Shakespeare.

Orestes, that fatal senior of Hamlet, is not, as we have said, the sole link between Æschylus and Shakespeare; we have noted a relation, less easily perceptible, between Prometheus and Hamlet. The mysterious intimacy between the two poets appears, with reference to this same Prometheus, still more strangely striking in a particular which, up to this time, has escaped the notice of observers and critics. Prometheus is the grandsire of Mab.

Let us prove it.

Prometheus, like all personages who have become legendary, like Solomon, like Cæsar, like Mahomet, like Charlemagne, like the Cid, like Joan of Arc, like Napoleon, has a double continuation, the one in history, the other in fable. Now, the continuation of Prometheus in the fable is this:

Prometheus, creator of men, is also creator of spirits. He is father of a dynasty of Divs, whose filiation the old metrical romance have preserved: Elf, that is to say, the Rapid, son of Prometheus; then Elfin, king of India; then Elfinan, founder of Cleopolis, town of the fairies; then Elfilin, builder of the golden wall; then Elfinell, winner of the battle of the demons; then Elfant, who built Panthea all in crystal; then Elfar, who killed Bicephalus and Tricephalus; then Elfinor, the magian, a kind of Salmoneus, who built over the sea a bridge of copper, sounding like thunder, 'non imitabile fulmen ære et cornipedum pulsu simularet equorum'; then seven hundred princes; then Elficleos the Sage; then Elferon the Beautiful; then Oberon; then Mab. Wonderful fable, which, with a profound meaning, unites the sidereal and the microscopic, the infinitely great and the infinitely small.

And it is thus that the animalcule of Shakespeare is connected with the giant of Æschylus.

The fairy—drawn athwart men's noses as they lie

asleep, in her chariot covered with the wings of grasshoppers, by eight little atomies harnessed with moonbeams and whipped with a lash of film—the fairy atom has for ancestor the huge Titan, robber of stars, nailed on the Caucasus, having one hand on the Caspian Gates, the other on the Gates of Ararat, one heel on the source of the Phasis, the other on the Validus-Murus, closing the passage between the mountain and the sea, a colossus whose vast profile of shadow was projected by the sun, according to its rising or setting, now over Europe as far as Corinth, now over Asia as far as Bangalore.

Nevertheless, Mab—who is also called Tanaquil—has all the wavering inconsistency of a dream. Under the name of Tanaquil she is the wife of the elder Tarquin, and she spins for young Servius Tullius the first tunic worn by a young Roman after leaving off the prætexta; Oberon, who turns out to be Numa, is her uncle. In 'Huon de Bordeaux' she is called Gloriande, and has for a lover Julius Cæsar, and Oberon is her son; in Spenser she is called Gloriana, and Oberon is her father; in Shakespeare she is called Titania, and Oberon is her husband. This name, Titania, connects Mab with the Titan, and Shakespeare with Æschylus.

CHAPTER IV

An eminent man of our day, a celebrated historian, a powerful orator, an earlier translator of Shakespeare, is in our opinion mistaken when he regrets, or appears to regret, the slight influence of Shakespeare upon the theatre of the nineteenth century. We cannot share that regret. An influence of any sort, even that of Shakespeare, could but mar the originality of the literary movement of our epoch. 'The system of Shakespeare', says this honourable and grave writer, with reference to that movement, 'may furnish, it seems to me, the plans after which

genius must henceforth work'. We have never been of that opinion, and we said so, in anticipation, forty years ago[1]. For us, Shakespeare is a genius, and not a system. On this point we have already explained our views, and we mean soon to explain them at greater length; but let us say now that what Shakespeare has done, is done once for all. There is no reverting to it. Admire or criticize, but do not recast. It is finished.

A distinguished critic, recently deceased, M. Chaudesaigues, lays stress on this reproach. 'Shakespeare', says he, 'has been revived without being followed. The romantic school has not imitated Shakespeare; that is its fault'. That is its merit. It is blamed for this; we praise it. The contemporary theatre, such as it is, is *itself*. The contemporary theatre has for device, 'Sum, non sequor'. It belongs to no 'system'. It has its own law, and it fulfils this law; it has its own life, and it lives this life.

The drama of Shakespeare expresses man at a given moment. Man passes away; this drama remains, having as its eternal background life, the heart, the world, and as its foreground the sixteenth century. This drama can neither be continued nor begun anew. Another age, another art.

The theatre of our day has no more followed Shakespeare than it has followed Æschylus! And without enumerating all the other reasons that we shall note farther on, how perplexed would he be who wished to imitate and copy, in making a choice between these two poets! Æschylus and Shakespeare seem made to prove that contraries may be admirable. The point of departure of the one is absolutely opposite to the point of departure of the other. Æschylus is concentration, Shakespeare is diffusion. One deserves applause because he is condensed, and the other because he is dispersed; to Æschylus unity,

[1] Preface to *Cromwell*.

to Shakespeare ubiquity. Between them they divide God. And as such intelligences are always complete, one feels in the unit drama of Æschylus the free agitation of passion, and in the diffusive drama of Shakespeare the convergence of all the rays of life. The one starts from unity and reaches the multiple; the other starts from the multiple and arrives at unity.

The evidence of this is striking, especially when we compare *Hamlet* with *Orestes*. Extraordinary double page, obverse and reverse of the same idea, which seems written expressly to prove how true it is that two different geniuses, making the same thing, will make two different things.

It is easy to see that the theatre of our day has, rightly or wrongly, traced out its own way between Greek unity and Shakespearean ubiquity.

CHAPTER V

Let us set aside, for the present, the question of contemporary art, and take up again the general question.

Imitation is always barren and bad.

As for Shakespeare—since Shakespeare is the poet who claims our attention now—he is in the highest degree a genius human and general; but, like every true genius, he is at the same time an idiosyncratic and a personal mind. Axiom: the poet starts from his own inner self to come to us. It is that which makes the poet inimitable.

Examine Shakespeare, fathom him, and see how determined he is to be himself. Expect from him no concession. He is certainly not selfish, but what he does he does of deliberate choice. He commands his art, within the limits, of course, of his proper work. For neither the art of Æschylus, nor the art of Aristophanes, nor the art of Plautus, nor the art

of Macchiavelli, nor the art of Calderon, nor the art of Molière, nor the art of Beaumarchais, nor any of the forms of art, deriving life each of them from the special life of a man of genius, would obey the orders given by Shakespeare. Art thus understood is vast equality and profound liberty; the region of equals is also the region of the free.

It is an element of Shakespeare's grandeur that he cannot be taken as a model. In order to realize his idiosyncrasy, open one of his plays—no matter which—it is always, foremost and above all, Shakespeare.

What more personal than *Troilus and Cressida?* A comic Troy! Here is *Much Ado about Nothing*—a tragedy which ends with a burst of laughter. Here is *The Winter's Tale*—a pastoral drama. Shakespeare is at home in his work. Would you see a despotism?—consider his imagination. What arbitrary determination to dream! What despotic resolution in his dizzy flight! What absoluteness in his indecision and wavering! The dream fills some of his plays to such a degree that man changes his nature, and becomes a cloud rather than a man. Angelo in *Measure for Measure* is a misty tyrant. He becomes disintegrated, and wears away. Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* is an Othello who fades out. In *Cymbeline* one thinks that Iachimo will become an Iago; but he dissolves. The dream is there—everywhere. Watch Manilius, Posthumus, Hermione, Perdita, passing by. In *The Tempest* the Duke of Milan has 'a brave son', who is like a dream within a dream. Ferdinand alone speaks of him, and no one but Ferdinand seems to have seen him. A brute becomes reasonable: witness the constable Elbow in *Measure for Measure*. An idiot comes suddenly by his wits: witness Cloten in *Cymbeline*. A king of Sicily is jealous of a king of Bohemia. Bohemia has a sea-coast; the shepherds pick up children there. Theseus, a duke, espouses Hippolyta, the

Amazon. Oberon comes in also. For here it is Shakespeare's will to dream; elsewhere he thinks.

We say more: where he dreams, he still thinks; with a profundity different, but not inferior.

Let men of genius remain in peace in their originality. There is something wild in these mysterious civilizers. Even in their comedy, even in their buffoonery, even in their laughter, even in their smile, there is the unknown. In them is felt the sacred dread that belongs to art, and the all-powerful terror of the imaginary mingled with the real. Each of them is in his cavern, alone. They hear each other from afar, but never copy. We are not aware that the hippopotamus imitates the roar of the elephant.

Lions do not ape each other.

Diderot does not recast Bayle; Beaumarchais does not copy Plautus, and has no need of Davus to create Figaro; Piranesi is not inspired by Dædalus; Isaiah does not begin again the work of Moses.

One day, at St Helena, M. de las Casas said, 'Sire, had I been like you, master of Prussia, I should have taken the sword of Frederick the Great from the tomb at Potsdam, and I should have worn it'. 'Fool', replied Napoleon, 'I had my own'.

Shakespeare's work is absolute, sovereign, imperious, eminently solitary, unneighbourly, sublime in radiance, absurd in reflection and must remain without a copy.

To imitate Shakespeare would be as insane as to imitate Racine would be stupid.

CHAPTER VI

Let us agree, by the way, respecting a designation much used on every hand, 'profanum vulgus', a word of a poet emphasized by pedants. This 'profanum vulgus' seems to be everybody's missile. Let us fix the meaning of this word. What is the 'vulgar herd'? The school says, 'It is the people'. And we, for our part, say, 'It is the school'.

But let us first define this expression, 'the school'. When we say 'the school', what must be understood? Let us explain. The school is the resultant of pedantry; the school is the literary excrescence of the budget; the school is intellectual mandarinship governing in the various authorized and official teachings, either of the press or of the state, from the theatrical *feuilleton* of the prefecture to the biographies and encyclopædias duly examined and stamped and hawked about, and made sometimes, by way of refinement, by republicans agreeable to the police; the school is the classic and scholastic orthodoxy, with its unbroken girdle of walls. Homeric and Virgilian antiquity traded upon by official and licensed *literati*, a sort of China calling itself Greece; the school is, summed up in one concretion which forms part of public order, all the knowledge of pedagogues, all the history of historiographers, all the poetry of laureates, all the philosophy of sophists, all the criticism of pedants, all the ferules of the teaching friars, all the religion of bigots, all the modesty of prudes, all the metaphysics of partisans, all the justice of placemen, all the old age of dapper young men bereft of their virility, all the flattery of courtiers, all the diatribes of censer-bearers, all the independence of flunkeys, all the certitudes of short sights and of base souls. The school hates Shakespeare. It detects him in the very act of mingling with the people, going to and fro in public thoroughfares, 'trivial', having a word for every man, speaking the language of the people, uttering the human cry like any other, accepted by those whom he accepts, applauded by hands black with tar, cheered by the hoarse throats of all those who come from labour and from weariness. The drama of Shakespeare is for the people; the school is indignant, and says, 'Odi profanum vulgus'. There is demagogy in this poetry roaming at large; the author of *Hamlet* 'panders to the mob'.

Be it so. The poet 'panders to the mob'.

If anything is great, it is that.

In the foreground everywhere, in full light, amidst the flourish of trumpets, are the powerful men, followed by the gilded men. The poet does not see them, or, if he does, he disdains them. He lifts his eyes and looks at God; then he drops his eyes and looks at the people. There in the depths of shadow, well-nigh invisible by reason of its submersion in darkness, is that fatal crowd, that vast and mournful heap of suffering, that venerable populace of the tattered and of the ignorant—a chaos of souls. That crowd of heads undulates obscurely like the waves of a nocturnal sea. From time to time there pass over that surface, like squalls over the water, catastrophes—a war, a pestilence, a royal favourite, a famine. This causes a tremor of but brief duration, the deeps of sorrow being calm, like the deeps of the sea. Despair leaves in the soul a dreadful weight, as of lead. The last word of the abyss is stupor. This is the night. Such is, beneath the mournful glooms amid which all is indistinct, the sombre sea of the poor.

These burdened ones are silent; they know nothing, they can do nothing, they think nothing: they simply endure. *Plectuntur Achivi.* They are hungry and cold. Their indelicate flesh appears through their tatters. Who makes those tatters? The purple. The nakedness of virgins comes from the nudity of odalisques. From the twisted rags of the daughters of the people fall pearls for the Fontanges and the Châteauroux. It is famine that gilds Versailles. The whole of this living and dying shadow moves; these spectral forms are in the pangs of death; the mother's breast is dry, the father has no work, the brain has no light. If there is a book in that destitution it resembles the pitcher, so insipid or corrupt is what it offers to the thirst of the mind. Mournful households!

The group of the little ones is wan. This whole mass expires and creeps, not having even the power

to love; and perhaps unknown to them, while they bow and submit, from all that vast unconsciousness in which Right dwells, from the inarticulate murmur of those wretched breaths mingled together proceeds an indescribable, confused voice, a mysterious fog of expression, succeeding, syllable by syllable in the darkness, in uttering wonderful words: Future, Humanity, Liberty, Equality, Progress. And the poet listens, and he hears; and he looks, and he sees; and he bends lower and lower, and he weeps; and then, growing with a strange growth, drawing from all that darkness his own transfiguration, he stands erect, terrible and tender, above all these wretched ones—those of high place as well as those of low—with flaming eyes.

And with a loud voice he demands a reckoning. And he says, Here is the effect! And he says, Here is the cause! Light is the remedy. *Erudimini.* He is like a great vase full of humanity shaken by the hand within the cloud, from which should fall to earth great drops—fire for the oppressors, dew for the oppressed. Ah! you deem that an evil? Well, we, for our part, approve it. It seems to us right that some one should speak when all are suffering. The ignorant who enjoy and the ignorant who suffer have equal need of instruction. The law of fraternity is derived from the law of labour. The practice of killing one another has had its day; the hour has come for loving one another. It is to promulgate these truths that the poet is good. For that, he must be of the people; for that, he must be of the populace: that is to say, the poet, as he leads in progress, should not draw back before the elbowing of facts, however ugly the facts may be. The actual distance between the real and the ideal cannot otherwise be measured. Besides, to drag the ball and chain a little completes a Vincent de Paul. To steel themselves, therefore, to promiscuous contact with trivial things, to the popular metaphor, to the great

life in common with those exiles from joy who are called the poor—such is the first duty of poets. It is useful, it is necessary, that the breath of the people should traverse these all-powerful souls. The people have something to say to them. It is good that there should be in Euripides a flavour of the herb-dealers of Athens, and in Shakespeare of the sailors of London.

Sacrifice to 'the mob', O poet! Sacrifice to that unfortunate, disinherited, vanquished, vagabond, shoeless, famished, repudiated, despairing mob; sacrifice to it, if it must be and when it must be, thy repose, thy fortune, thy joy, thy country, thy liberty, thy life. The mob is the human race in misery. The mob is the mournful beginning of the people. The mob is the great victim of darkness. Sacrifice to it! Sacrifice thyself! Let thyself be hunted, let thyself be exiled like Voltaire to Ferney, like D'Aubigné to Geneva, like Dante to Verona, like Juvenal to Syene, like Tacitus to Methymna, like Æschylus to Gela, like John to Patmos, like Elijah to Horeb, like Thucydides to Thrace, like Isaiah to Ezion-geber! Sacrifice to the mob. Sacrifice to it thy gold, and thy blood which is more than thy gold, and thy thought which is more than thy blood, and thy love which is more than thy thought; sacrifice to it everything except justice. Receive its complaint; listen to it touching its faults and touching the faults of others; hear its confession and its accusation. Give it thy ear, thy hand, thy arm, thy heart. Do everything for it, excepting evil. Alas! it suffers so much, and it knows nothing. Correct it, warn it, instruct it, guide it, train it. Put it to the school of honesty. Make it spell truth, show it the alphabet of reason, teach it to read virtue, probity, generosity, mercy. Hold thy book wide open. Be there, attentive, vigilant, kind, faithful, humble. Light up the brain, inflame the mind, extinguish selfishness; and thyself give the ex-

ample. The poor are privation: be thou abnegation. Teach! irradiate! they need thee; thou art their great thirst. To learn is the first step; to live is but the second. Be at their command: dost thou hear? Be ever there in the form of light! For it is beautiful on this sombre earth, during this dark life, brief passage to something beyond,—it is beautiful that Force should have Right for a master, that Progress should have Courage as a leader, that Intelligence should have Honour as a sovereign, that Conscience should have Duty as a despot, that Civilization should have Liberty as a queen, and that the servant of Ignorance should be the Light.

BOOK V

THE MINDS AND THE MASSES

CHAPTER I

MEMORABLE things have been done during the last eighty years. The pavement is cluttered with the rubbish of a vast demolition.

What is done is but little compared with what remains to be done.

To destroy is mere task-work; the work of the artist is to build. Progress demolishes with the left hand; it is with the right hand that it builds.

The left hand of Progress is called Force; the right hand is called Mind.

A great deal of useful destruction has, up to this hour, been accomplished; all the old cumbersome civilization is, thanks to our fathers, cleared away. It is well; it is finished, it is thrown down, it is on the ground. Up, now, O intelligences! gird yourselves for work, for travail, for fatigue, for duty; it becomes necessary to construct.

Here are three questions,

To construct what?

To construct where?

To construct how?

We reply,

To construct the people.

To construct it according to the laws of progress.

To construct it by means of light.

CHAPTER II

To work for the people—this is the great and urgent need.

It is important, at the present time, to bear in

mind that the human soul has still greater need of the ideal than of the real.

It is by the real that we exist; it is by the ideal that we live. Would you realize the difference? Animals exist, man lives [1].

To live, is to understand. To live, is to smile at the present; it is to be able to see over the wall of the future. To live, is to have in one's self a balance, and to weigh in it good and evil. To live, is to have justice, truth, reason, devotion, probity, sincerity, common-sense, right, and duty welded to the heart. To live, is to know what one is worth, what one can do and should do. Life is conscience. Cato would not rise before Ptolemy. Cato really lived.

Literature secretes civilization, poetry secretes the ideal. That is why literature is one of the wants of societies; that is why poetry is a hunger of the soul.

That is why poets are the first instructors of the people.

That is why Shakespeare must be translated in France.

That is why Molière must be translated in England.

That is why comments must be made on them.

That is why there must be a vast public literary domain.

That is why all the poets, all the philosophers, all the thinkers, all the producers of nobility of soul must be translated, commented on, published, printed, reprinted, stereotyped, distributed, hawked about, explained, recited, spread abroad, given to all, given cheaply, given at cost price, given for nothing.

Poetry evolves heroism. M. Royer-Collard, that original and ironical friend of routine, was, taken for all in all, a wise and noble spirit. Some one we know heard him say one day, 'Spartacus is a poet.'

[1] Perhaps it should be noted that, in the original, existence is made the higher, more absolute mode of being; *e.g.*, 'Les animaux vivent, l'homme existe.' Tr.

That dreadful and consoling Ezekiel, the tragic revealer of progress, has all kinds of singular passages full of a profound meaning: 'The voice said to me, Fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city'. And elsewhere: 'The spirit having gone into them, whithersoever the spirit was to go they went'. And again: 'Behold, a hand was sent unto me; and lo, a roll of a book was therein. The voice said unto me: Eat this roll. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness'[1]. To eat the book is a strange and striking image, embodying the whole formula of perfectibility, which is made up of knowledge above, and of instruction below.

We have just said: 'Literature secretes civilization'. Do you doubt it? Open the first statistics you come across.

Here is one fact which we find under our hand: Toulon Penitentiary, 1862. Three thousand and ten prisoners. Of these three thousand and ten convicts, forty know a little more than to read and write, two hundred and eighty-seven know how to read and write, nine hundred and four read badly and write badly, seventeen hundred and seventy-nine can neither read nor write. In this wretched crowd, all the merely mechanical trades are represented by numbers decreasing as you rise toward the enlightened professions; and you arrive at this final result,—goldsmiths and jewellers in the prison, four; ecclesiastics, three; attorneys, two; actors, one; musicians, one; men of letters, not one.

The transformation of the crowd into the people —profound task! It is to this labour that the men called Socialists have devoted themselves during the last forty years. The author of this book, however insignificant he may be, is one of the oldest in this labour. *The Last Day of a Condemned Pris-*

[1] In this passage, as elsewhere, the quotations appear to be made from memory. TR.

oner dates from 1828, and *Claude Gueux* from 1834. If he claims his place among these philosophers, it is because it is a place of persecution. A certain hatred of Socialism, very blind, but very general, has raged for fifteen or sixteen years, and is still raging most bitterly among the influential classes (classes, then, are still in existence ?). Let it not be forgotten that true Socialism has for its end the elevation of the masses to the civic dignity, and that, therefore, its principal care is for moral and intellectual cultivation.

The first hunger is ignorance; Socialism wishes, then, above all, to instruct. That does not hinder Socialism from being calumniated, and Socialists from being denounced. To most of the infuriated tremblers who have the public ear at the present moment, these reformers are public enemies; they are guilty of everything that has gone wrong. 'O Romans!' said Tertullian, 'we are just, kind, thinking, lettered, honest men. We meet to pray, and we love you because you are our brethren. We are gentle and peaceable like little children, and we wish for concord among men. Nevertheless, O Romans, if the Tiber overflows, or if the Nile does not, you cry, "To the lions with the Christians!"'

CHAPTER III

THE democratic idea, the new bridge of civilization, is just now undergoing the formidable trial of overweight. Every other idea would certainly give way under the load that it is made to bear. Democracy proves its solidity by the absurdities that are heaped upon it without shaking it. It must bear everything that people choose to place upon it. At this moment they are attempting to make it carry despotism.

'The people have no need of liberty' — such was the password of a certain innocent but deluded school, the head of which has been dead some years. That poor honest dreamer sincerely believed that progress

can continue without freedom. We have heard him put forth, probably without intention, this aphorism: 'Freedom is good for the rich'. Such maxims have the disadvantage of not being prejudicial to the establishment of empires.

No, no, no: nothing without freedom!

Servitude is the soul blinded. Can you picture to yourself a man voluntarily blind? This terrible thing exists. There are willing slaves. A smile in irons! Can anything be more hideous? He who is not free is not a man; he who is not free has no sight, no knowledge, no discernment, no growth, no comprehension, no will, no faith, no love; he has no wife and children, he has only a female with young: he lives not. *Ab luce principium.* Freedom is the apple of the eye; freedom is the visual organ of progress.

To attempt, because freedom has inconvenience and even perils, to produce civilization without it, would be like attempting to cultivate the ground without the sun, which is also a not unexceptionable star. One day, in the too beautiful summer of 1829, a critic, now forgotten—and wrongly, for he was not without some talent—M.P., feeling too warm, exclaimed as he mended his pen: 'I am going to write down the sun.'

Certain social theories, very distinct from Socialism as we understand it and desire it, have gone astray. Let us discard all that resembles the convent, the barrack, the cell, and the straight line. Paraguay minus the Jesuits is Paraguay just the same. To give a new shape to the evil is not a useful task. To remodel the old slavery would be stupid. Let the nations of Europe beware of a despotism made anew from materials which to some extent they have themselves supplied. Such a thing, cemented with a special philosophy, might easily endure. We have just mentioned the theorists, some of them otherwise upright and sincere, who, through fear of a dispersion

of activities and energies, and of what they call 'anarchy', have arrived at an almost Chinese acceptance of absolute social centralization. They turn their resignation into a doctrine. Provided man eats and drinks, all is right. The happiness of the beast is the solution. But this is a happiness which others might call by a different name.

We dream for nations something besides a felicity made up solely of obedience. The bastinado sums up that sort of felicity for the Turkish fellah, the knout for the Russian serf, and the cat-o'-nine-tails for the English soldier. These Socialists outside of Socialism derive from Joseph de Maistre and from Anselion, perhaps without suspecting it; for these ingenious theorists, the partisans of the 'deed accomplished', have—or fancy they have—democratic intentions, and speak energetically of 'the principles of '89.' Let these involuntary philosophers of a possible despotism reflect that to indoctrinate the masses against freedom, to allow appetite and fatalism to get a hold upon the minds of men, to saturate them with materialism and expose them to the results—this would be to understand progress in the fashion of that worthy man who applauded a new gibbet and exclaimed, 'Excellent! We have had till now only an old wooden gallows; but times have changed for the better, and here we are with a good stone gibbet, which will do for our children and our grandchildren!'

CHAPTER IV

To enjoy a full stomach, a satisfied digestion, a satiated belly, is doubtless something, for it is the enjoyment of the brute. However, one may set one's ambition higher.

Certainly, a good salary is a fine thing. To have beneath one's feet the firm ground of good wages, is pleasant. The wise man likes to want nothing. To assure his own position is the characteristic of an

intelligent man. An official chair, with ten thousand sesterces a year, is a graceful and convenient seat; liberal emoluments give a fresh complexion and good health; one lives to an old age in pleasant well-paid sinecures; the high financial world, abounding in profits, is a place agreeable to live in; to be on a good footing at court settles a family well and brings a fortune. As for myself, I prefer to all these solid comforts the old leaky vessel in which Bishop Quodvultdeus embarks with a smile.

There is something beyond satisfying one's appetite. The goal of man is not the goal of the animal.

A moral lift is necessary. The life of nations, like the life of individuals, has its moments of depression; these moments pass, certainly, but no trace of them ought to remain. Man, at this day, tends to fall into the stomach: man must be replaced in the heart, man must be replaced in the brain. The brain—this is the bold sovereign that must be restored! The social question requires to-day, more than ever, to be examined on the side of human dignity.

To show man the human goal; to ameliorate intelligence first, the animal afterward; to contemn the flesh as long as the thought is despised, and to set the example upon their own flesh—such is the actual, immediate, urgent duty of writers.

This is what men of genius have done at all times.

You ask in what poets can be useful. Simply this—in permeating civilization with light.

CHAPTER V

Up to this day there has been a literature for the lettered. In France particularly, as we have already said, literature tended to form a caste. To be a poet was something like being a mandarin. Words did not all belong by right to the language; registration was granted or refused by the dictionary. The dictionary had a will of its own. Imagine the botanist

declaring to a vegetable that it does not exist, and Nature timidly offering an insect to entomology which refuses it as incorrect! Imagine astronomy cavilling at the stars! We recollect having heard an academician, now dead, say before the full Academy that French had been spoken in France only in the seventeenth century, and then for but twelve years,—we no longer recollect which years. Let us abandon—for it is time—this order of ideas; democracy requires it. The present enlargement of thought demands something else. Let us forsake the college, the conclave, the cell, trivial tastes, trivial art, the trivial chapel.

Poetry is not a coteric. An effort is now being made to galvanize things that are defunct. Let us strive against this tendency. Let us insist on the truths that are urgent. The masterpieces recommended by the manual for the bachelorship, compliments in verse and in prose, tragedies serving merely as canopies over the head of some king, inspiration in full dress, decorated big-wigs laying down the laws of poetry, the manuals of poetic art which forget La Fontaine and for which Molière is a 'perhaps', the Planats emasculating the Corneilles, prudish tongues, thought shut in between the four walls of Quintilian, Longinus, Boileau, and La Harpe: all this—although the official public instruction is soaked and saturated with it—all this is of the past. A certain epoch called the great century—which was certainly, for literature, a fine century—is after all, at bottom, nothing but a literary monologue. Is it possible to realize such a thing—a literature which is an aside? A certain form of art seems to bear upon its pediment the legend, 'No admittance.' As for ourselves, we understand poetry only with the door wide open. The hour has struck for hoisting the 'All for All'. What is needed by civilization, henceforth a grown-up matron, is a popular literature.

The year 1832 opened a debate, on the surface

literary, at bottom social and human. The time has come to conclude the debate. We conclude it in favour of a literature having in view this goal: 'The People.'

Thirty-one years ago the author of these pages wrote, in the preface to *Lucretia Borgia*, a word often repeated since: 'The poet feels the burden of souls'. Were it worth while, he would add here that, possible error apart, this utterance of his conscience has been the rule of his life.

CHAPTER VI

MACCHIAVELLI cast upon the people a strange glance. To heap the measure, to overflow the cup, to exaggerate the horror of the prince's deed, to make the burden more crushing in order to make the revolt more certain, to cause idolatry to grow into execration, to push the masses to extremities—such seems to be his policy. His Yes signifies No. He charges despotism to the muzzle in order to explode it; the tyrant becomes in his hands a hideous projectile which will shatter itself. Macchiavelli conspires. For whom? Against whom? Guess! His apotheosis of kings is thus the thing to make regicides. On the head of his Prince he places a diadem of crimes, a tiara of vices, a halo of baseness, and he invites you to adore his monster with the air of a man expecting an avenger. He glorifies evil with a sidelong glance toward the shadow where Harmodius lurks. Macchiavelli, this getter up of princely outrages, this servant of the Medici and of the Borgias, had in his youth been put to the rack for admiring Brutus and Cassius. He had perhaps plotted with the Soderini for the deliverance of Florence. Does he remember this? Does he continue? His advice is followed, like the lightning, by a low rumbling in the cloud, an alarming reverberation. What did he mean to say? Against whom has he a design? Is the advice for or against

him to whom he gives it? One day at Florence, in the garden of Cosmo Ruccelai, there being present the Duke of Mantua and John de' Medici, who afterward commanded the Black Bands of Tuscany, Varchi, the enemy of Macchiavelli, heard the latter say to the two princes, 'Let the people read no book, not even mine'. It is curious to compare with this remark the advice given by Voltaire to the Duc de Choiseul—at once advice to the minister, and insinuation for the King: 'Let the noodles read our nonsense; there is no danger in reading, my lord. What can a great monarch like the King of France fear? The people are but rabble, and the books are but trash'. Let them read nothing—let them read everything. These two pieces of contrary advice coincide more than one would think. Voltaire with hidden claws is purring at the feet of the King. Voltaire and Macchiavelli are two formidable, indirect revolutionists, dissimilar in everything, and yet really identical by their profound hatred disguised as flattery of their master. The one is sly, the other is sinister. The princes of the sixteenth century had as theorist upon their infamies, and as enigmatical courtier, Macchiavelli, a dark enthusiast. It is a dreadful thing to be flattered by a sphinx! Better to be flattered, like Louis XV, by a cat.

Conclusion: Make the people read Macchiavelli, and make them read Voltaire.

Macchiavelli will inspire them with horror, and Voltaire with contempt, for crowned guilt.

But the hearts should turn, above all, toward the grand, pure poets, be they sweet like Virgil, or bitter like Juvenal.

CHAPTER VII

THE progress of man through intellectual advancement: there is no safety but in that. Teach! learn! All the revolutions of the future are enclosed

and engulfed in this phrase: Gratuitous and obligatory instruction.

This large scheme of intellectual instruction should be crowned by the exposition of works of the first order. The highest place to the men of genius!

Wherever there is a gathering of men, there ought to be, in a special place, a public expositor of the great thinkers.

By a great thinker we mean a beneficent thinker.

The perpetual presence of the beautiful in their works makes the poets the highest of teachers.

No one can foresee the quantity of light that will be evolved by placing the people in communication with men of genius. The combination of the heart of the people with the heart of the poet will be the voltaic pile of civilization.

Will the people understand this magnificent teaching? Certainly. We know of nothing too high for the people. The soul of the people is great. Have you ever gone, of a holiday, to a theatre open gratuitously to all? What do you think of that audience. Do you know of any other more spontaneous and intelligent? Do you know, even in the forest, a vibration more profound? The court of Versailles admires like a well-drilled regiment; the people throw themselves passionately into the beautiful. They pack together, crowd, amalgamate, combine, and knead themselves in the theatre,—a living paste, which the poet is about to mould. The powerful thumb of Molière will presently make its mark on it; the nail of Corneille will scratch this shapeless mass. Whence does that mass come? From the Courtille, from the Porcherons, from the Cunette; it is barefoot, barearmed, ragged. Silence; This is the raw material of humanity [1].

The house is crowded; the vast multitude looks, listens, loves; all consciences, deeply moved, throw

[1] The places mentioned are *banlieues*, or low quarters of Paris, full of drinking-dens. Tr.

out their internal fire; all eyes glisten; the huge, thousand-headed beast is there, the Mob of Burke, the Plebs of Titus Livius, the Fex Urbis of Cicero. It caresses the beautiful, smiling at it with the grace of a woman. It is literary in the most refined sense of the word; nothing equals the delicacy of the monster. The tumultuous crowd trembles, blushes, palpitates; its modesty is surprising: the crowd is a virgin. No prudery, however; this creature is no fool. It is wanting in no kind of sympathy; it has in itself the whole keyboard, from passion to irony, from sarcasm to the sob. Its pity is more than pity, it is real mercy. God is felt in it. Suddenly the sublime passes, and the sombre electricity of the deep instantly arouses all that mass of hearts; enthusiasm works its transfiguration. And now, is the enemy at the gates? is the country in danger? Give the word to this populace, and it will re-enact Thermopylæ. What has produced this transformation? Poetry.

The multitude—and in this lies their grandeur—are profoundly open to the ideal. When they come in contact with lofty art they are pleased, they palpitate. Not a detail escapes them. The crowd is one liquid and living expanse capable of vibration. A mob is a sensitive-plant. Contact with the beautiful stirs ecstatically the surface of multitudes, a sure sign that the deeps are sounded. A rustling of leaves, a mysterious passing breath—the crowd trembles beneath the sacred insufflation of the deep.

And even when the man of the people is not of the crowd, he is still a good auditor of great things. His ingenuousness is honest, his curiosity healthy. Ignorance is a longing. His near relation with Nature renders him open to the holy emotion of the true. He has secret absorbents for poetry which he himself does not suspect. Every kind of instruction is due to the people. The more divine the light, the more is it made for this simple soul. We would have in

every village a chair from which Homer should be explained to the peasants.

CHAPTER VIII

Excessive devotion to the material is the evil of our epoch; hence a certain sluggishness.

The great problem is to restore to the human mind something of the ideal. Whence shall we draw the ideal? Wherever it is to be found. The poets, the philosophers, the thinkers are its urns. The ideal is in Æschylus, in Isaiah, in Juvenal, in Alighieri, in Shakespeare. Throw Æschylus, throw Isaiah, throw Juvenal, throw Dante, throw Shakespeare into the deep soul of the human race.

Pour Job, Solomon, Pindar, Ezekiel, Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, Theocritus, Plautus, Lucretius, Virgil, Terence, Horace, Catullus, Tacitus, Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, Tertullian, Petrarch, Pascal, Milton, Descartes, Corneille, La Fontaine, Montesquieu, Diderot, Rousseau, Beaumarchais, Sedaine, André Chénier, Kant, Byron, Schiller—pour all these souls into man.

Pour in all the wits from Æsop up to Molière, all the intellects from Plato up to Newton, all the encyclopædists from Aristotle up to Voltaire.

By this means you will cure the present malady and establish for ever the health of the human mind.

You will cure the middle-class, and found the people.

As already indicated, after the destruction which has delivered the world, you will construct the home for the permanent life of the race.

What an aim—to construct the people! Principles combined with science, all possible quantity of the absolute introduced by degrees into the fact, Utopia treated successively by every mode of realization, — by political economy, by philosophy, by physics, by chemistry, by dynamics, by logic, by

art; union gradually replacing antagonism, and unity replacing union; for religion God, for priest the father, for prayer virtue, for field the whole earth, for language the word, for law the right, for motive-power duty, for hygiene labour, for economy universal peace, for canvas the very life, for the goal progress, for authority freedom, for people the man. Such is the simplification.

And at the summit the ideal.

The ideal!—stable type of ever-moving progress.

To whom belong men of genius, if not to thee, O people? They do belong to thee; they are thy sons and thy fathers. Thou givest birth to them, and they teach thee. They open in thy chaos vistas of light. As children, they have drunk at thy breasts. They have leaped in the universal matrix of humanity. Each of thy phases, O people, is an avatar. The deep action of life—it is in thee that it must be sought. Thou art the great mother. From thee issue the mysterious company of the intelligences: to thee, therefore, let them return.

To thee, O people, they are dedicated by their author, God!

BOOK VI

THE BEAUTIFUL THE SERVANT OF THE TRUE

CHAPTER I

Ah, minds, be useful! Be of some service. Do not be fastidious when so much depends upon being efficient and good. Art for art's sake may be very fine, but art for progress is finer still. To dream of castles in Spain is well; to dream of Utopia is better. Ah! you must think? Then think of making man better. You must have a vision? Here is a vision for you—the ideal. The prophet seeks solitude, but not isolation. He unravels and untwists the threads of humanity, tied and rolled in a skein within his soul; he does not break them. He goes into the desert to think—of whom? Of the multitudes. It is not to the forests that he speaks, it is to the cities. It is not a reed that he sees shaken with the wind, it is man; it is not against lions that he cries aloud, it is against tyrants. Woe unto thee, Ahab! woe unto thee, Hoshea! woe unto you, kings! woe unto you, Pharaohs! is the cry of the great solitary. Then he weeps.

Over what? Over that eternal Babylonish captivity suffered long ago by Israel; suffered by Poland, by Roumania, by Hungary, by Venice to-day. He grows old, the good and gloomy thinker; he watches, he lies in wait, he listens, he looks, his ear inclined to the silence, his eye straining into the night, his claw half unsheathed toward the wicked. Go, then, and talk of 'art for art's sake' to this cenobite of the ideal,

He walks straight toward his goal, which is this: the best. To this he is consecrated.

He is not his own; he belongs to his apostleship. To him is intrusted the great duty of impelling the human race upon its forward march. Genius is not made for genius, it is made for man. Genius on earth is God giving himself. Whenever a masterpiece appears, a distribution of God is taking place. The masterpiece is a variety of the miracle. Thence, in all religions and among all peoples, comes faith in divine men. They deceive themselves who think that we deny the divinity of the Christs.

At the point now reached by the social question, all action should be in common. Isolated forces frustrate one another; the ideal and the real are solidary. Art should aid science. These two wheels of progress should turn together.

Generation of new talents, noble group of writers and poets, legion of young men, O living future of my country, your elders love and salute you! Courage! let us consecrate ourselves. Let us devote ourselves to the good, to the true, to the just; it is well for us to do so.

Some pure lovers of art, moved by a solicitude which is not without its dignity and its nobility, discard the formula, 'Art for Progress', the Beautiful Useful, fearing lest the useful should deform the beautiful. They tremble to see the drudge's hand attached to the muse's arm. According to them, the ideal may become perverted by too much contact with reality. They are solicitous for the sublime if it descends as far as to humanity. Ah! they are in error.

The useful, far from circumscribing the sublime, enlarges it. The application of the sublime to human affairs produces unexpected masterpieces. The useful, considered in itself and as an element combining with the sublime, is of several kinds: there is the useful which is tender, and there is the useful which is indig-

nant. Tender, it cheers the unfortunate and creates the social epopee; indignant, it flagellates the wicked and creates the divine satire. Moses passes the rod to Jesus; and after having caused the water to gush from the rock, that same august rod drives the vendors from the Temple.

What! could art decrease by being expanded? No; a further service is an added beauty.

But people protest: To undertake the cure of social evils, to amend the codes, to impeach law in the court of right, to utter those hideous words, 'penitentiary', 'convict-keeper', 'galley-slave', 'girl of the street'; to inspect the police registers, to contract the business of dispensaries, to study the questions of wages and want of work, to taste the black bread of the poor, to seek labour for the working-woman, to confront fashionable idleness with ragged sloth, to throw down the partition of ignorance, to open schools, to teach little children how to read; to attack shame, infamy, error, vice, crime, want of conscience; to preach the multiplication of spelling-books, to proclaim the equality of the sun, to improve the food of intellects and of hearts, to give meat and drink, to demand solutions for problems and shoes for naked feet—these things are not the business of the azure. Art is the azure.

Yes, art is the azure; but the azure from above, whence falls the ray which swells the wheat, yellows the maize, rounds the apple, gilds the orange, sweetens the grape. Again I say, a further service is an added beauty. At all events, where is the diminution? To ripen the beet-root, to water the potato, to increase the yield of lucern, of clover, or of hay; to be a fellow-workman with the ploughman, the vine-dresser, and the gardener, this does not deprive the heavens of one star. Ah! immensity does not despise utility, and what does it lose by it? Does the vast vital fluid that we call magnetic or electric flash through the cloud-masses with less splendour because it

consents to perform the office of pilot to a bark, and to keep constant to the north the little needle intrusted to it, the gigantic guide? Is Aurora less splendid, clad less in purple and emerald; suffers she any diminution of majesty and of radiant grace, because, foreseeing an insect's thirst, she carefully secretes in the flower the dewdrop needed by the bee?

Yet people insist that to compose social poetry, human poetry, popular poetry; to grumble against the evil and laud the good, to be the spokesman of public wrath, to insult despots, to make knaves despair, to emancipate man before he is of age, to push souls forward and darkness backward, to know that there are thieves and tyrants, to clean penal cells, to flush the sewer of public uncleanness—shall Polyhymnia bare her arm to these sordid tasks? Fie!

Why not?

Homer was the geographer and historian of his time, Moses the legislator of his, Juvenal the judge of his, Dante the theologian of his, Shakespeare the moralist of his, Voltaire the philosopher of his. No region, in speculation or in fact, is shut to the mind. Here a horizon, there wings; freedom for all to soar.

For certain sublime beings, to soar is to serve. In the desert, not a drop of water; the wretched file of pilgrims drag along, overcome with a horrible thirst; suddenly, in the horizon, above an undulation in the sands, a lämmergeier is seen soaring, and all the caravan cry out, 'There is a spring!'

What thinks Æschylus of art for art's sake? If ever there was a poet, Æschylus is certainly he. Listen to his reply. It is in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, line 1039. Æschylus speaks: 'From the beginning the illustrious poet has served men. Orpheus has taught the horror of murder, Musæus oracles and medicine, Hesiod agriculture, and divine Homer heroism. And I, after Homer, have sung Patroclus and Teucer the lion-hearted, to the end that every citizen may endeavour to imitate great men'.

Just as the whole sea is salt, the whole Bible is poetry. This poetry takes its own time for talking politics. Open 1 Samuel, chapter viii. The Jewish people demand a king. . . . 'And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.' . . . 'And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots'. . . . 'And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants'. . . . 'And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day'. Samuel, we see, denies the right divine; Deuteronomy shakes the altar,—the false altar, let us observe; but is not the next altar always the false altar? 'Ye shall demolish the altars of the false gods. Ye shall seek God where he dwells'. It is almost Pantheism. Because it takes part in human affairs, because it is democratic here, iconoclastic there, is this book less magnificent and less supreme? If poetry is not in the Bible, where is it?

You say: The muse is made to sing, to love, to believe, to pray. Yes, and no. Let us understand each other. To sing whom? The void? To love whom? One's self? To believe what? The dogma? To pray to what? The idol? No; here is the truth: to sing the ideal, to love humanity, to believe in progress, to pray toward the infinite.

Take care, ye who trace these circles about the poet; ye place him outside of humanity. That the poet should be beyond humanity in one way—by his wings, by his immense flight, by his possible sudden disappearance in the fathomless—is well, it must be so; but on condition of reappearance. He may go, but he must return. Let him have wings for the infinite, provided he has feet for the earth, and that, after having been seen flying, he is seen to walk. Having gone beyond humanity, let him become man again. After he has been seen as an archangel, let him be once more a brother. Let the star which is in that eye shed a tear, and let it be a human tear. Thus, human and superhuman, he shall be the poet. But to be altogether beyond man, is not to be. Show me thy foot, genius, and let us see if, like myself, thou hast the dust of earth upon thy heel. If thou hast never walked in the dusty footpath which I tread, thou knowest not me, nor I thee. Depart! Thou who believest thyself an angel art but a bird.

Help from the strong for the weak, help from the great for the small, help from the free for the slaves, help from the thinkers for the ignorant, help from the solitary for the multitudes, such is the law, from Isaiah to Voltaire. He who does not follow this law may be a genius, but he is only a genius of luxury. By not handling the things of the earth, he thinks to purify himself; but he annuls himself. He is the refined, the delicate, he may be the exquisite genius; he is not the great genius. Any one, roughly useful, but useful, has the right to ask, on seeing this good-for-nothing genius, 'Who is this idler?' The amphora which refuses to go to the fountain deserves the hisses of the water-pots.

Great is he who consecrates himself! Even when overcome, he remains serene, and his misfortune is happiness. No, it is not a bad thing for the poet to be brought face to face with duty. Duty has a stern

likeness to the ideal. The task of doing one's duty is worth undertaking. No, the jostling with Cato is not to be avoided. No, no, no; truth, honesty, the instruction of the masses, human liberty, manly virtue, conscience, are not things to disdain. Indignation and compassion for the mournful slavery of man are but two sides of the same faculty; those who are capable of wrath are capable of love. To level the tyrant and the slave, what a magnificent endeavour! Now, the whole of one side of actual society is tyrant, and all the other side is slave. A grim settlement is impending, and it will be accomplished. All thinkers must work with that end in view. They will gain greatness in that work. To be the servant of God in the task of progress, and the apostle of God to the people, such is the law which regulates the growth of genius.

CHAPTER II

THERE are two poets—the poet of caprice, and the poet of logic; and there is a third poet, a composite of the other two, correcting and completing the one by the other, and summing up both in a higher entity, so that the two forms are blended in one. This last is the first. He has caprice, and he follows the divine breath; he has logic, and he follows duty. The first writes the Song of Songs, the second writes Leviticus, the third writes the Psalms and the Prophecies. The first is Horace, the second is Lucan, the third is Juvenal; the first is Pindar, the second is Hesiod, the third is Homer.

No loss of beauty results from goodness. Is the lion less beautiful than the tiger because he has the faculty of compassionate emotion? Is that mane deprived of its majesty because the jaw opens to drop the child into its mother's arms? Does the roaring vanish from that terrible mouth because it has licked Androcles? The unhelpful genius, no

matter how graceful, is really ugly. A prodigy without love is a monster. Let us love! let us love!

To love has never hindered from pleasing. Where have you seen one form of the good excluding the other? On the contrary, all that is good is allied. Let me, however, be understood: it does not follow that to have one quality implies necessarily the possession of the other; but it would be strange that one quality added to another should produce diminution. To be useful, is but to be useful; to be beautiful, is but to be beautiful; to be both useful and beautiful, is to be sublime. Such are Saint Paul in the first century, Tacitus and Juvenal in the second, Dante in the thirteenth, Shakespeare in the sixteenth, Milton and Molière in the seventeenth.

We have just now recalled a saying that has become famous, 'Art for art's sake'. Let us, once for all, explain ourselves touching this expression. If an assertion very general and very often repeated (in good faith, we believe) can be credited, the shibboleth, 'Art for art's sake', must have been written by the author of this book. Written? never. You may read, from the first to the last line, all that we have published; you will not find these words. It is the contrary that is written throughout our works, and, we insist, in our entire life. As to the expression in itself, what reality has it? Here is the fact, which several of our contemporaries remember as well as we do. One day, thirty-five years ago, in a discussion between critics and poets on Voltaire's tragedies, the author of this book threw out this interruption: 'This tragedy is not a tragedy. It does not contain living men; it contains glib maxims. Rather, a hundred times, "Art for art's sake".' This remark, turned—doubtless involuntarily—from its true sense to serve the ends of the discussion, has since assumed, to the great surprise of him who had uttered it, the proportions of a formula. It is this phrase, limited to *Alzire* and to the *Orphan of China*, and incontestable

in that restricted application, which has been turned into a perfect declaration of principles, and an axiom to inscribe on the banner of Art.

This point settled, let us go on.

Between two verses—the one by Pindar, deifying a coachman or glorifying the brazen nails of a chariot wheel; the other by Archilochus, so powerful that, after having read it, Jeffreys would leave off his career of crime and would hang himself on the gallows prepared by him for honest people—between two such verses of equal beauty, I prefer that of Archilochus.

In times anterior to history, when poetry is fabulous and legendary, it has a Promethean grandeur. What forms this grandeur? Utility. Orpheus tames wild animals; Amphion builds cities; the poet, tamer and architect, Linus aiding Hercules, Musæus assisting Dædalus, poetry a civilizing power: such are the origins. Tradition agrees with reason: in that, the good sense of the nations is not deceived. The people have always invented fables in the interest of truth. Magnified by that hazy remoteness, everything is great. Now, the beast-taming poet whom you admire in Orpheus, you may recognize again in Juvenal.

We insist on Juvenal. Few poets have been more insulted, more contested, more calumniated. Calumny against Juvenal has been drawn at such long date that it still lasts. It passes from one knave of the pen to another. These grand haters of evil are hated by all the flatterers of power and success. The mob of servile sophists, of writers who have the mark of the collar about their necks, of bullying historiographers, of scholiasts kept and fed, of court and school followers, stand in the way of the punishers and avengers. They croak around these eagles. Scant and grudging justice is rendered to dispensers of justice. They hinder the masters, and rouse the indignation of the lackeys, for there is such a thing as the indignation of baseness.

Moreover, the diminutives cannot do less than

help each other, and Cæsarion must at least have Tyrannion as a support. The pedant breaks ferules for the satrap. For such jobs there are lettered courtiers and official pedagogues. These poor, dear vices, so open-handed, these excellent condescending crimes, his Highness Rufinus, his Majesty Claudius, the august Madame Messalina who entertains so sumptuously and grants pensions out of her privy purse, and who abides and perpetuates her reign under the names of Theodora, Fredegonde, Agnes, Margaret of Burgundy, Isabel of Bavaria, Catherine de' Medici, Catherine of Russia, Caroline of Naples, etc., etc.—all these great lords the crimes, all these fine ladies the turpitudes, shall they have the sorrow of witnessing the triumph of Juvenal? No. War with the scourge in the name of sceptres! War with the rod in the name of the cliques! That is well! Go on, courtiers, clients, eunuchs, and scribes. Go on, publicans and pharisees. You will not hinder the republic from thanking Juvenal, or the temple from approving Jesus.

Isaiah, Juvenal, Dante, are virgins. Observe their downcast eyes. There is chastity in the wrath of the just against the unjust. The Imprecation can be as holy as the Hosanna; and indignation, honest indignation, has the very purity of virtue. In point of whiteness, the foam has no reason to envy the snow.

CHAPTER III

All history proves the working partnership of art and progress. *Dictus ob hoc lenire tigres.* Rhythm is a power, a power that the Middle Ages recognize and submit to not less than antiquity. The second barbarism, feudal barbarism, also dreads the power of verse. The barons, not over-timid, are abashed before the poet,—who is this man? They fear lest 'a manly song be sung'. Behind this unknown man is the spirit of civilization. The old donjons

full of carnage open their wild eyes and scan the darkness; anxiety seizes them. Feudality trembles, the den is disturbed. The dragons and the hydras are ill at ease. Why? Because an invisible god is there.

It is curious to find this power of poetry in countries where barbarism is densest, particularly in England, in that extreme feudal darkness, 'penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos.' If we believe the legend—a form of history as true and as false as any other—it is due to poetry that Colgrim, besieged by the Britons, is relieved in York by his brother Bardulf the Saxon; that King Awlof penetrates into the camp of Athelstan; that Werburgh, prince of Northumbria, is delivered by the Welsh, whence, it is said, that Celtic device of the Prince of Wales, *Ich dien* [1]; that Alfred, King of England, triumphs over Gitro, King of the Danes, and that Richard the Lion-hearted escapes from the prison of Losenstein. Ranulf, Earl of Chester, attacked in his castle of Rothelan, is saved by the intervention of the minstrels, the legend is confirmed by the privileges still enjoyed under Elizabeth by the minstrels, who were patronized by the Lords of Dalton.

The poet had the right of reprimand and menace. In 1316, at Whitsuntide, Edward II being at table in the grand hall of Westminster with the peers of England, a female minstrel entered the hall on horseback, rode all around, saluted Edward II, predicted in a loud voice to the minion Spencer the gibbet and castration by the hand of the executioner, and to the King the horn by means of which a red-hot iron should be buried in his intestines, placed on the table before the King a letter, and departed, unchallenged and unmolested.

At the festivals, the minstrels passed before the priests, and were more honourably treated. At Abingdon, at the festival of the Holy Cross, each

[1] Welsh *eich dyn*, 'behold your man.' See Stormonth's Dictionary, *s. v.* TR.

of the twelve priests received fourpence, and each of the twelve minstrels two shillings. At the priory of Maxtoke, the custom was to give supper to the minstrels in the Painted Chamber lighted by eight huge wax candles.

As we advance toward the North, the rising fogs seem to magnify the poet. In Scotland, his proportions are colossal. If anything surpasses the legend of the rhapsodists, it is the legend of the scalds. At the approach of Edward of England, the bards defend Stirling as the three hundred had defended Sparta; and they have their Thermopylæ, equal to that of Leonidas. Ossian, perfectly certain and real, has had a plagiarist. That is nothing; but this plagiarist has done more than rob him, he has made him insipid. To know Fingal only through Macpherson is as if one knew Amadis only through Tressan. They show at Staffa the poet's stone, *Clachan an Bairdh*, so named, according to many antiquaries, long before the visit of Walter Scott to the Hebrides. This Bard's Chair, a great hollow rock furnishing a proper seat for a giant, is at the entrance of the grotto. Around it are the waves and the clouds. Behind the Clachan an Bairdh is piled the superhuman geometry of the basaltic prisms, the chaos of colonnades and waves, and all the mystery of that dread edifice. The gallery of Fingal runs next to the poet's chair, and there the sea breaks before entering beneath that terrible ceiling. At nightfall the fishermen of the Mackinnon clan think they see in that chair a leaning figure. 'It is the ghost', they say; and no one would venture even in full daylight, to ascend to that awful seat; for to the idea of the stone is linked the idea of the tomb, and none but the shadow-man may sit upon that granite chair.

CHAPTER IV

THOUGHT is power.

All power is duty. Should this power enter into

repose in our age? Should duty shut its eyes? and is the moment come for art to disarm? Less than ever. Thanks to 1789, the human caravan has reached a high plateau; and, the horizon being vaster, art has more to do. This is all. To every widening of the horizon, an enlargement of conscience corresponds.

We have not reached the goal. Concord condensed into felicity, civilization summed up in harmony, that is yet far off. In the eighteenth century that dream was so distant that it seemed guilty. The Abbé de St. Pierre was expelled from the Academy for having dreamed that dream, an expulsion which appears rather severe at a period when pastorals carried the day even with Fontenelle, and when St. Lambert invented the idyl for the use of the nobility. The Abbé de St. Pierre has left behind him a word and a dream; the word is his, own, 'Beneficence'; his dream is the dream of us all, 'Fraternity'. This dream, which made Cardinal de Polignac foam, and Voltaire smile, is now less hidden that it once was in the midst of the improbable; it is a little nearer: but we have not attained it. The people, those orphans seeking their mother, do not yet hold in their hand the hem of the robe of peace.

There remains about us enough of slavery, of sophistry, of war, and of death, to make it essential that the spirit of civilization should relinquish none of its resources. The idea of the right divine is not yet entirely dissipated. The spirit which animated Ferdinand VII in Spain, Ferdinand II in Naples, George IV in England, Nicholas in Russia, is still in the air. A spectral remnant still flits about. From that fatal cloud inspirations descend upon wearers of crowns bent in dark meditation.

Civilization has not yet done with the granters of constitutions, with the proprietors of nations, and with the legitimate and hereditary madmen who assert themselves kings by the grace of God, and think that they have the right of manumission over the

human race. It is becoming important to raise some obstacle, to show bad will to the past, and to bring some check to bear on these men, on these dogmas, on these chimeras which stand in the way. Intelligence, thought, science, austere art, philosophy, ought to watch and beware of misunderstandings. False rights contrive very easily to put actual armies in the field. There are murdered Polands at the horizon. 'All my anxiety', said a contemporary poet, recently deceased, 'is the smoke of my cigar'. My anxiety is also a smoke—the smoke of the cities which are burning yonder. Let us, therefore, bring the tyrants to grief, if we can.

Let us again, in the loudest possible voice, repeat the lesson of the just and the unjust, of right and usurpation, of sworn truth and perjury, of good and evil, of *fas et nefas*; let us display all our old antitheses, as they say. Let us contrast what ought to be with what actually is. Let us dispel all confusion touching these things. Bring light, ye that have it! Let us oppose dogma to dogma, principle to principle, energy to obstinacy, truth to imposture, dream to dream,—the dream of the future to the dream of the past,—liberty to despotism. We shall be able to stretch ourselves at full length and smoke out the cigar of fanciful poetry, and laugh over Boccaccio's *Decameron*, with the soft blue sky over our heads, on the day when the sovereignty of a king shall be exactly of the same dimensions as the liberty of a man. Until then, little sleep; I am distrustful.

Place sentinels everywhere. Do not expect from despots a large share of liberty. Let all the Polands effect their own deliverance. Unlock the future with your own hand. Do not hope that your chain will forge itself into the key of freedom. Up, children of the fatherland! O mowers of the steppes, arise! Trust to the good intentions of orthodox czars just enough to take up arms. Hypocrisies and apologies, being traps, are an added danger.

We live in a time when orators are heard praising the magnanimity of white bears and the tender feelings of panthers. Amnesty, clemency, grandeur of soul; an era of felicity opens; fatherly love is the order of the day; behold all that is already done; it must not be thought that the spirit of the time is not understood; august arms are open; rally still closer round the Emperor; Muscovy is kind-hearted. See how happy the serfs are! the streams are to flow with milk, prosperity, liberty for all; your princes groan, like you, over the past; they are excellent. Come, fear nothing, little ones! All very good; but candidly, we are of those who put no faith in the lachrymal gland of crocodiles.

The reigning public monstrosities impose stern obligations on the conscience of the thinker, the philosopher, or the poet. Incorruptibility must resist corruption. It is more than ever requisite to show men the ideal, that mirror reflecting the face of God.

CHAPTER V

In literature and philosophy we encounter now and then a man with tears and laughter at command, Heraclitus masked as Democritus; often a very great man like Voltaire. Such a man is an irony, sometimes tragic, which keeps its countenance.

These men, under the pressure of the influences and prejudices of their time, speak with a double meaning. One of the most profound is Bayle, the man of Rotterdam, the powerful thinker. When Bayle coolly utters this maxim: 'It is better to weaken the grace of a thought than to anger a tyrant,' I smile, for I know the man; I think of him persecuted, almost proscribed, and I know well that he has given way to the temptation of affirming merely to give me the itch of contradiction. But when it is a poet who speaks, a poet wholly free, rich, happy, prosperous, inviolable, one expects clear, frank, and

wholesome instruction; one cannot believe that such a man can be guilty of anything like desertion of conscience; and it is with a blush that one reads this: 'Here below, in time of peace, let every man sweep before his own door. In war, if conquered, one must make terms with the enemy.' . . . 'Let every enthusiast be put on a cross when he reaches his thirtieth year. When once he comes to know the world, he ceases to be a dupe, and becomes a rogue.' . . . 'What utility, what result, what advantage does the holy liberty of the press offer you? You have the certain demonstration of it,—a profound contempt for public opinion.' . . . 'There are people who have a mania for railing at everything that is great; they are men who have attacked the Holy Alliance: and yet nothing has been invented more august and more salutary, for humanity.' These things, belittling to the man who wrote them, are signed *Goethe*. When he wrote them, Goethe was sixty years old. Indifference to good and evil is heady, liable to intoxicate; and this is what comes of it. The lesson is sad, the sight mournful; for here the helot is an intelligence.

A quotation may be a pillory. We post on the public highway these lugubrious sentences; it is our duty. Goethe wrote that. Let it be remembered, and let no one among the poets fall again into the same error [1].

[1] Never having known the real Goethe, Victor Hugo never could do justice to him; and possibly the relation would not have been improved by better acquaintance. The character and works that we call 'Goethe' make up an exceedingly complex whole; to condemn it is akin to condemning an entire civilization. Burke professed himself unable to draw up an indictment against a whole nation; and in Goethe's case any one broadly acquainted with the facts would probably find the task almost equally awkward. Hitherto, at least, it is observable that the severe judgments have not emanated from the most patient and competent investigators. It would be lamentable indeed should sensible people be misled, by the garbled scraps here cited,

To become impassioned for the good, for the true, for the just; to suffer with the sufferers; to feel upon one's soul all the strokes inflicted by tormentors upon human flesh; to be scourged with Christ and flogged with the negro; to be strengthened and to lament; to scale, a Titan, that frowning summit where Peter and Cæsar make their swords fraternize, *gladium cum gladio copulemus;* to pile for that escalade the Ossa of the ideal on the Pelion of the real; to make a vast apportionment of hope; to avail one's self of the ubiquity of the book in order to be everywhere at the same time with a consoling thought; to push pell-mell men, women, children, whites, blacks, peoples, hangmen, tyrants, victims, impostors, the ignorant, proletaries, serfs, slaves, masters, toward the future (a precipice to some, to others a deliverance); to go forth, to awaken, to hasten, to march, to run, to think, to will—that is indeed well; that makes it worth while to be a poet. Take care! You are losing your temper. Certainly, but I am gaining wrath. And now for thy blast in my pinions, O hurricane!

There was, of late years, a moment when impassibility was recommended to poets as a condition of divinity. To be indifferent was called being Olympian. Where had they seen that? That is an Olympus very unlike the real one. Read Homer. The Olympians are passion, and nothing else. Boundless humanity—such is their divinity. They fight incessantly. One has a bow, another a lance, another a sword, another a club, another thunderbolts. One of them compels the leopards to draw him. Another—Wisdom she—has cut off the serpent-bristling head of Night, and nailed it to her shield. Such is the calm of the Olympians. Their wraths cause the thunders to roll from end to end of the Iliad and of

into hasty prejudgment of him whose spirit and work are so much more accurately indicated by this line of his,

'Wouldst thou give freedom to many, first dare to do service to many.' Tr.

the Odyssey. These wraths, when just, are good. The poet who has them is the true Olympian. Juvenal, Dante, Agrippa d'Aubigné, and Miltor were subject to these wraths, Molière too. From the soul of Alceste flashes constantly the lightning of 'vigorous hatreds.' It was the hatred of evil which Jesus meant when he said, 'I am come to bring war.'

I like Stesichorus, indignant, preventing the alliance of Greece with Phalaris, and fighting the brazen bull with strokes of the lyre.

Louis XIV found it good to have Racine sleeping in his chamber when he, the King, was ill, thus turning the poet into an assistant to his apothecary. Wonderful patronage of letters! But he asked nothing more from the men of letters, and the horizon of his alcove seemed to him sufficient for them. One day Racine, somewhat urged by Madame de Maintenon, conceived the thought of leaving the King's chamber and of visiting the garrets of the people. Thence a memoir on the public distress. Louis XIV cast at Racine a killing look. Poets fare ill when, being courtiers, they do what royal mistresses ask of them. Racine, at the suggestion of Madame de Maintenon, risks a remonstrance which causes him to be driven from court, and he dies of it; Voltaire, at the instigation of Madame de Pompadour, ventures a madrigal—an awkward one, it appears—which causes him to be driven from France, and he does not die of it. Louis XV on reading the madrigal ('Et gardez tous deux vos conquêtes') had exclaimed, 'What a fool this Voltaire is!'

Some years ago 'a well-authorized pen,' as they say in official and academic cant, wrote this: 'The greatest service that poets can render us is to be good for nothing. We ask of them nothing else.' Observe the scope and sweep of this word,—'the poets'—which includes Linus, Musæus, Orpheus, Homer, Job, Hesiod, Moses, Daniel, Amos, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Æsop, David, Solomon, Æschylus, Sopho-

cles, Euripides, Pindar, Archilochus, Tyrtæus, Stesichorus, Menander, Plato, Asclepiades, Pythagoras, Anacreon, Theocritus, Lucretius, Plautus, Terence, Virgil, Horace, Catullus, Juvenal, Apuleius, Lucan, Persius, Tibullus, Seneca, Petrarch, Ossian, Saadi, Firdûsi, Dante, Cervantes, Calderon, Lope de Vega, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Camöens, Marot, Ronsard, Régnier, Agrippa d'Aubigné, Malherbe, Segrais, Racan, Milton, Pierre Corneille, Molière, Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine, Fontenelle, Regnard, Lesage, Swift, Voltaire, Diderot, Beaumarchais, Sedaine, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, André Chénier, Klopstock, Lessing, Wieland, Schiller, Goethe, Hofmann, Alfieri, Châteaubriand, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, Burns, Walter Scott, Balzac, Musset, Béranger, Peilico, Vigny, Dumas, George Sand, Lamartine,—all declared by the oracle 'good for nothing', and having uselessness for the excellence. That sentence—a 'success', it appears—has been very often repeated. We repeat it in our turn. When the conceit of an idiot reaches such proportions, it deserves registration. The writer who uttered that aphorism is, so they assure us, one of the high personages of the day. We have no objection; dignities shorten no ears.

Octavius Augustus, on the morning of the battle of Actium, met an ass called by its driver 'Triumphus'. This Triumphus, endowed with the faculty of braying, seemed to him of good omen. Octavius Augustus won the battle; and remembering Triumphus, had him cast in bronze and set up in the Capitol. That made a Capitoline ass; but still—an ass.

One can understand kings saying to the poet, 'Be useless'; but one does not understand the people saying so to him. The poet is for the people. 'Pro populo poëta', wrote Agrippa d'Aubigné. 'All things to all men', exclaims Saint Paul. What is an intelligence? A feeder of souls. The poet is at the same time a menace and a promise. The distress he arouses in oppressors calms and consoles

the oppressed. It is the glory of the poet to place a restless pillow on the purple bed of the tormentors. It is often thanks to him that the tyrant awakes, saying, 'I have slept badly.' Every slave, every despondency, every sorrow, every misfortune, every distress, every hunger, and every thirst has a claim upon the poet; he has one creditor—the human race.

Certainly it detracts nothing from the poet to be the great servant. All the mysterious voices sing within him none the less because upon occasion, and impelled by duty, he has uttered the cry of a race, because his bosom must needs swell with the deep human sob. Speaking so loudly does not prevent his speaking low. He is not less the confidant, and sometimes the confessor, of hearts. He is not less intimately connected with those who love, with those who think, with those who sigh, thrusting his head in the darkness between the heads of lovers. André Chénier's love-verses are deprived of none of their tender serenity by their proximity to the wrathful iambic: 'Weep thou, O virtue, if I die!' The poet is the only living being to whom is given both the voice of thunder and the whisper, having, like Nature, within himself the rumbling of the cloud and the rustling of the leaf. This is a double function, individual and public; and it is for this reason that he needs, as it were, two souls.

Ennius said, 'I have three of them,—an Oscan soul, a Greek soul, and a Latin soul.' It is true that he referred only to the place of his birth, to the place of his education, and to the place where he was a citizen; and moreover Ennius was but a rough cast of a poet, vast, but shapeless.

No poet can exist without that activity of soul which is the resultant of conscience. The primal moral laws need to be confirmed; the new moral laws need to be revealed: these two series do not coincide without some effort. This effort is incumbent on the poet. At every turn he performs the function

of the philosopher. He must defend, according to the side attacked, now the liberty of the human mind, now the liberty of the human heart,—to love being no less holy than to think. There is nothing in all that of 'Art for art's sake'.

Into the midst of those goers and comers that we call the living, comes the poet, to tame, like ancient Orpheus, the tiger in man,—his evil instincts,—and, like legendary Amphion, to pull down the walls of prejudice and superstition, to mount the new blocks, to relay the foundations and the corner-stones, and to build anew the city of human society.

That such a service,—to co-operate in the work of civilization,—should involve loss of beauty for poetry and of dignity for the poet, is a proposition which one cannot enunciate without smiling. Useful art preserves and augments all its graces, all its charms, all its prestige. In truth Æschylus is not degraded by taking part with Prometheus, the man progress crucified by force on Caucasus, and gnawed alive by hate; Lucretius is no less great for having loosened the grave-clothes of idolatry and disentangled human thought from the knotted bonds of religions (*arctis nodis religionum*); the branding of tyrants with the red-hot iron of prophecy does not lessen Isaiah; the defence of his country does not taint Tyrtæus. The beautiful is not degraded by serving the ends of freedom and the amelioration of the human multitudes. The words, 'a people liberated', would fitly end a strophe. No, patriotic or revolutionary usefulness robs poetry of nothing. For having screened under its cliffs the three peasants who took the terrible oath from which sprang Switzerland free, the huge Grütli is none the less at nightfall a lofty mass of serene shadow alive with herds, whence falls afar the soft tintinnabulation of innumerable little bells tinkling unseen through the clear twilight air.

PART THIRD

CONCLUSION

BOOK I

AFTER DEATH—SHAKESPEARE—ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

In 1784, Bonaparte, then fifteen years old, arrived at the military school of Paris from Brienne, being one among four under the conduct of a minim priest. He mounted one hundred and seventy-three steps carrying his small valise, and reached in the attic the barrack chamber he was to occupy. This chamber had two beds, and a small window opening on the great yard of the school. The young predecessors of Bonaparte had bescrawled the whitewashed walls with charcoal, and the new-comer could read in his little cell these four inscriptions, which we ourselves read there thirty-five years ago: 'An epaulet is very long to win': *De Montgivray.* 'The finest day in life is that of a battle': *Vicomte de Tinténiac.* 'Life is but a prolonged lie': *Le Chevalier Adolphe Delmas.* 'The end of all is six feet of earth': *Le Comte de la Villette.* With the trifling substitution of the word 'empire' for 'epaulet', these four sentences contained the whole destiny of Bonaparte, and formed a kind of 'Mene, Tekel, Upharsin', written in advance upon that wall. Desmazis, junior, who accompanied Bonaparte, being his room-mate, and about to occupy one of the two beds, saw him take a pencil—Desmazis himself has related the incident—and draw, under the inscriptions that he had just read, a rough sketch of

his house at Ajaccio; then, by the side of that house, without suspecting that he was thus bringing near the Island of Corsica another mysterious island then hid in the far future, he wrote the last of the four sentences: 'The end of all is six feet of earth.'

Bonaparte was right. For the conqueror, for the soldier, for the man of material fact, the end of all is six feet of earth; for the man of thought, all begins there.

Death is a power.

For him who has had no activity but that of the mind, the tomb is the elimination of the obstacle. To be dead is to be all-powerful.

The man of war is formidable while alive; he stands erect; the earth is silent, *siluit:* he has extermination in his gesture; millions of haggard men rush after him, a fierce horde, sometimes a ruffianly one; it is no longer a human head, it is a conqueror, it is a captain, it is a king of kings, it is an emperor, it is a dazzling crown of laurels which passes, throwing out lightning flashes, and showing, in a starry light beneath, a vague profile of Cæsar. This vision is splendid and astounding; but a little gravel in the liver, or an abrasion of the pylorus,—six feet of earth, and all is over. This solar spectrum vanishes. This tumultuous life falls into a hole; the human race pursues its way, leaving behind this emptiness. If this man-hurricane has made some lucky rupture—like Alexander in India, Charlemagne in Scandinavia, and Bonaparte in old Europe—that is all that remains of him. But let some passer-by who has in him the ideal; let a poor wretch like Homer throw out a word in the darkness, and die,—that word lights up the gloom, and becomes a star.

This defeated man, driven from town to town, is called Dante Alighieri,—take care! This exile is called Æschylus, this prisoner is called Ezekiel,—beware! This one-handed man is winged,—it is Miguel Cervantes. Do you know whom you see

wayfaring there before you? It is a sick man, Tyrtæus; it is a slave, Plautus; it is a labourer, Spinoza; it is a valet, Rousseau. Well, that abasement, that labour, that servitude, that infirmity, is power,—the supreme power, mind.

On the dunghill like Job, under the stick, like Epictetus, under contempt like Molière, mind remains mind. It is destined to have the last word. The Caliph Almanzor makes the people spit on Averroes at the door of the mosque of Cordova; the Duke of York himself spits on Milton; a Rohan almost a prince, 'Duc ne daigne, Rohan suis'[1], attempts to cudgel Voltaire to death; Descartes is driven from France in the name of Aristotle; Tasso pays for a kiss given a princess by twenty years in a prison cell; Louis XV sends Diderot to Vincennes: these are mere incidents; must there not be some clouds? Those appearances that were taken for realities, those princes, those kings, melt away; there remain only what should remain, the human mind on the one side, the divine mind on the other; the true work and the true workers; society to be perfected and made fruitful, science seeking the true, art creating the beautiful, the thirst of thought, the torment and the happiness of man; the lower life aspiring to the higher. Real questions are to be dealt with; progress in intelligence and by intelligence is to be secured. The aid of the poets, the prophets, the philosophers, the inspired thinkers is invoked. It is perceived that philosophy is a nourishment, and poetry a need. Man cannot live by bread alone. Give up the poets, and you give up civilization. There comes an hour when the human race is compelled to reckon with Shakespeare the actor, and with Isaiah the beggar.

They are the more present when they are no longer seen. Once dead, these beings live.

[1] 'I would not stoop to be a duke; I am Rohan.' TR.

What life did they lead? What kind of men were they? What do we know of them? Sometimes but little, as of Shakespeare; often nothing, as of those of ancient days. Did Job exist? Is Homer one, or several? Méziriac makes Æsop straight, and Planudes makes him a hunchback. Is it true that the prophet Hosea, in order to show his love for his country, even when she was fallen into opprobrium and infamy, espoused a harlot, and named his children Mourning, Famine, Shame, Pestilence, and Misery? Is it true that Hesiod must be divided between Cyme in Æolis, where he was born, and Ascra in Bœotia, where he is said to have been brought up? Velleius Paterculus places him one hundred and twenty years after Homer, with whom Quintilian makes him contemporary. Which of the two is right? What matters it? The poets being dead, their thought reigns. Having been, they are.

They do more work among us to-day than when they were alive. Others who have departed this life rest from their labours: dead men of genius work.

They work upon what? Upon minds. They make civilization.

The end of all is six feet of earth? No; there all begins, germinates, flowers, grows, issues, streams forth. Such maxims are very well for you, O men of the sword!

Lay yourselves down, disappear, lie in the grave, rot. So be it.

While life lasts, gilding, caparisons, drums and trumpets, panoplies, banners in the wind, tumults, delude the senses. The crowd gazes with admiration on these things. It imagines that it sees something grand. Who wears the casque? Who the cuirass? Who the sword-belt? Who is spurred, helmeted, plumed, armed? Hurrah for that one! At death the difference becomes plain. Juvenal takes Hannibal in the hollow of his hand.

It is not Cæsar, it is the thinker, who can say when

he expires, 'Deus fio'. So long as he remains a man, his flesh interposes between other men and him. The flesh is a cloud upon genius. Death, that immense light, comes and penetrates the man with its aurora. No more flesh, no more matter, no more shadow. The unknown which was within him manifests itself and beams forth. In order that a mind may give all its light, death is required. When that which was a genius becomes a soul, the human race begins to be dazzled. A book within which there is something of the phantom is irresistible.

He who is still living does not appear disinterested. People mistrust him. People dispute him because they jostle against him. Both to be alive and to be a genius is too much. This being goes and comes as you do; it walks the earth; it has weight; it casts a shadow; it obstructs. There seems a kind of importunity in the presence of too great a man; men find him not sufficiently like themselves. As we have said before, they owe him a grudge. Who is this privileged person? This functionary cannot be dismissed. Persecution makes him greater, decapitation crowns him. Nothing can be done against him, nothing for him, nothing with him. He is responsible, but not to you. He has his instructions. What he executes may be discussed, not modified. It seems as though he had a mission to accomplish from some one who is not a man. Such an exception displeases; hence more hisses than applause.

Once dead, he is out of the way. The useless hiss dies out. Living, he was a rival: dead, he is a benefactor. He becomes, in the beautiful expression of Lebrun, 'the irreparable man.' Lebrun says this of Montesquieu; Boileau says the same thing of Molière. 'Avant qu'un peu de terre', etc [1]. This

[1] Part of the nineteenth line of Boileau's seventh epistle, which is dedicated to Racine. The whole sentence may be roughly rendered as follows:

handful of earth has equally exalted Voltaire. Voltaire, so great in the eighteenth century, is still greater in the nineteenth. The grave is a crucible. The earth thrown on a man cleanses his name, and allows it not to pass forth till purified. Voltaire has lost his false glory and retained the true. To lose the false is gain. Voltaire is neither a lyric poet, nor a comic poet, nor a tragic poet; he is the indignant yet tender critic of the Old World; he is the mild reformer of manners; he is the man who softens men. Voltaire, having lost ground as a poet, has risen as an apostle. He has done what is good rather than what is beautiful. The good being included in the beautiful, those who, like Dante and Shakespeare, have produced the beautiful, surpass Voltaire; but below the poet, the place of the philosopher is still very high, and Voltaire is the philosopher. Voltaire is good-sense in a continual stream. Excepting literature, he is a good judge of everything. In spite of his insulters, Voltaire was almost adored during his lifetime; to-day he is, on thoroughly valid grounds, admired. The eighteenth century saw his mind; we see his soul. Frederick II, who liked to banter him, wrote to D' Alembert: 'Voltaire plays the buffoon. This century resembles the old courts; it has its fool, and Arouet is he.' This fool of the century was its sage.

Such, for great minds, are the issues of the tomb. That mysterious entrance otherwhere leaves light behind. Their setting is resplendent. Death makes their authority free and effective.

CHAPTER II

SHAKESPEARE is the chief glory of England. England

> Before a little earth, obtained by intercession,
> Had for ever hidden Molière from human sight,
> A thousand of those beauties, so highly praised to-day,
> Were by silly people rejected before our very eyes.
> TR.

has in politics, Cromwell; in philosophy, Bacon; in science, Newton; three lofty men of genius. But Cromwell is stained with cruelty, and Bacon with meanness; as to Newton, his edifice is at this moment tottering. Shakespeare is pure, as Cromwell and Bacon are not, and unshaken, as Newton is not. Moreover, his genius is loftier. Above Newton are Copernicus and Galileo; above Bacon are Descartes and Kant; above Cromwell are Danton and Bonaparte; above Shakespeare there is no one. Shakespeare has equals, but no superior. It is a singular honour for a land to have borne such a man. One may say to that land, *Alma parens!* The native town of Shakespeare is a chosen city; an eternal light falls on that cradle; Stratford on-Avon has a security that Smyrna, Rhodes, Colophon, Salamis, Chios, Argos, and Athens, the seven towns which dispute the birthplace of Homer, do not possess.

Shakespeare is a human mind; he is also an English mind. He is very English—too English; he is English so far as to subdue the horror surrounding the abominable kings whom he places on the stage,—when they are kings of England; so far as to depreciate Philip Augustus in comparison with John Lackland; so far as to make a scapegoat, Falstaff, expressly in order to load him with the princely misdeeds of the young Henry V; so far as in a certain measure to share the hypocrises of a history alleged to be national. Lastly, he is English so far as to attempt to exculpate Henry VIII; it is true that the eye of Elizabeth is fixed upon him. But at the same time we insist,—for therein consists his greatness—this English poet is a humane genius. Art, like religion, has its *Ecce Homo*. Shakespeare is one of those to whom may be applied the noble name of Man.

England is selfish: selfishness is an island. This Albion, who minds her own business and is apt to be eyed askance by other nations, is a little lacking in disinterested greatness; of this, Shakespeare

gives her some portion. With that purple robe he drapes his country's shoulders. By his fame he is universal and cosmopolitan. He overflows island and egotism on every side. Deprive England of Shakespeare, and consider how soon this nation's far-shining light would fade. Shakespeare modifies the English countenance and makes it beautiful. He lessens the resemblance of England to Carthage.

Strange meaning of the apparition of men of genius! No great poet is born at Sparta, no great poet at Carthage. This condemns these two cities. Search, and you shall find this: Sparta is but the city of logic; Carthage is but the city of matter; lore is wanting to both. Carthage immolates her children by the sword, and Sparta sacrifices her virgins by nudity; here innocence is killed, and there modesty. Carthage knows only her crates and bales; Sparta blends herself wholly with the law, there is her true territory: it is for the laws that her men die at Thermopylæ. Carthage is hard, Sparta is cold. They are two republics based on stone. Therefore no books. The eternal sower, who is never deceived, has scattered none of the seed of genius on their thankless soil. Such wheat is not to be confided to the rock.

Heroism, however, is not denied to them; they will have, if necessary, either the martyr or the captain. Leonidas is possible for Sparta, Hannibal for Carthage; but neither Sparta nor Carthage is capable of Homer. They are devoid of a certain sublime tenderness which makes the poet spring from the loins of a people. This latent tenderness, this *flebile nescio quid*, England possesses, witness Shakespeare; one might also add, witness Wilberforce.

England, mercantile like Carthage, legal like Sparta, is better than Sparta and Carthage. She is honoured by that august exception, a poet; to have given birth to Shakespeare makes England great.

Shakespeare's place is among the most sublime

in that select company of absolute intelligences who, ever and anon reinforced by some noble newcomer, form the crown of civilization, lighting the human race with a wide radiance. Shakespeare is legion. Alone, he forms the counterpoise to our grand French seventeenth century, and almost to the eighteenth.

When one arrives in England, the first thing the eye seeks is the statue of Shakespeare; it falls upon the statue of Wellington.

Wellington is a general who, in collaboration with chance, gained a battle.

If you insist, you are taken to a place called Westminster where there are kings a crowd of kings; there is also a nook called 'The Poets' Corner'. There, in the shade of four or five magnificent monuments where some royal nobodies shine in marble and bronze, you are shown a statuette upon a little bracket, and beneath this statuette the name, 'William Shakespeare'.

Furthermore, there are statues everywhere,—statues to the heart's content. Statue of Charles, statue of Edward, statue of William, statues of three or four Georges, of whom one was an idiot. Statue of the Duke of Richmond at Huntley; statue of Napier at Portsmouth; statue of Father Mathew at Cork; statue of Herbert Ingram—I forget where. A man has well drilled the riflemen—a statue to him; a man has commanded a manœuvre of the Horse Guards—a statue to him. Another has been a supporter of the past, has squandered all the wealth of England in paying a coalition of kings against 1789, against democracy, against light, against the upward movement of the human race—quick! a pedestal for that, a statue to Mr Pitt. Another has knowingly fought against truth, in the hope that it might be vanquished; but finding, one fine morning, that truth is hard-lived, that it is strong, that it might come to be intrusted with forming a cabinet, has then passed abruptly over to its side—one more pedestal, a statue to Mr Peel. Everywhere, in every

street, in every square, at every step, gigantic notes of admiration in the shape of columns,—a column to the Duke of York, which should take the form of a point of interrogation; a column to Nelson, with Caraccioli's ghost pointing the finger at it; a column to Wellington, already mentioned; columns for everybody: it is sufficient to have trailed a sabre a little. At Guernsey, by the seaside, on a promontory, there is a high column—almost a tower—resembling a light-house. This one is struck by lightning. Æschylus would have contented himself with it. To whom is this? To General Doyle. Who is General Doyle? A general. What did this general do? He constructed roads. At his own expense? No, at the expense of the inhabitants. A column to him. None to Shakespeare, none to Milton, none to Newton; the name of Byron is obscene. Such is England, that illustrious and powerful nation.

It avails little that this nation has for pioneer and guide the generous British press, which is more than free, which is sovereign, and which through innumerable excellent journals throws light upon every question,—that is where England is; and let not France laugh too loudly, with her statue of Négrier; nor, Belgium, with her statue of Belliard; nor Prussia with her statue of Blücher; nor Austria, with the statue that she probably has of Schwartzenberg; nor Russia, with the statue that she must have of Souwaroff. If it is not Schwartzenberg, it is Windischgrätz; if it is not Souwaroff, it is Kutusoff.

Be Paskiewitch or Jellachich, statue; be Augereau or Bessières, statue; be an Arthur Wellesley, they will make you a colossus, and the ladies will dedicate you to yourself, quite naked, with this inscription: 'Achilles'. A young man, twenty years of age, performs the heroic action of marrying a beautiful young girl; they prepare for him triumphal arches; they come to see him out of curiosity; the garter is sent to him as on the morrow of a battle; the public

squares are brilliant with fireworks; people who perhaps have grey beards put on perukes to come and harangue him almost on their knees; they shoot into the air millions sterling in squibs and rockets, amid the applause of a multitude in tatters who will have no bread to-morrow; starving Lancashire forms a companion-piece to the wedding: people are in ecstasies, they fire guns, they ring the bells, 'Rule Britannia!' 'God save the prince'. What! this young man has the kindness to do this? What a glory for the nation! Universal admiration—a great people becomes frantic, a great city falls into a swoon, a balcony looking upon the passage of the young man is rented for five hundred guineas, people crowd themselves together, press upon each other, thrust each other beneath the wheels of his carriage, seven women are crushed to death in the enthusiasm, their little children are picked up dead under the trampling feet, a hundred persons, partially stifled, are carried to the hospital; the joy is inexpressible. While this is going on in London, the cutting of the Isthmus of Panama is postponed by a war; the cutting of the Isthmus of Suez depends on some Ismail Pasha; a company (limited) undertakes the sale of the water of Jordan at a guinea a bottle; walls are invented proof against any cannon-ball, after which missiles are invented which will go through any wall; an Armstrong cannon-shot costs fifty pounds; Byzantium contemplates Abdul-Azis, Rome goes to confession; the frogs, encouraged by the stork, call for a heron; Greece, after Otho, again wants a king; Mexico, after Iturbide, again wants an emperor; China wants two of them, the Middle King, a Tartar, and the Celestial Emperor (Tien Wang), a China-man. . . O earth! throne of stupidity.

CHAPTER III

THE glory of Shakespeare reached England from abroad. There was almost a definite day and hour

when one might have been present at the landing of his fame at Dover.

It required three hundred years for England to catch those two words that the whole world shouted in her ear—'William Shakespeare'.

What is England? She is Elizabeth. No incarnation is more complete. In admiring Elizabeth, England worships her own image in the glass. Proud and magnanimous, but strangely hypocritical, great but pedantic, able but haughty, at once daring and prudish, having favourites but no masters, even in her bed her own mistress, all-powerful queen, inaccessible woman—Elizabeth is a virgin as England is an island. Like England, she calls herself Empress of the sea, *Basilea maris*. A dreadful deep, swept by the wraths that spare not even Essex, and by the tempests that engulf armadas, defends this virgin and this island from all approach. The ocean is the guardian of this modesty. A certain celibacy, in fact, constitutes the genius of England. Alliances there may be, but no marriage. The world must always keep its distance To live alone, to go alone, to reign alone, to be alone—such is Elizabeth, such is England.

On the whole, a remarkable queen, and a wonderful nation.

Shakespeare, on the contrary, is a sympathetic genius. To him, insularity, far from being a source of strength, is a bond which he would gladly break. A little more, and Shakespeare would be European. He loves and praises France; he calls her 'the soldier of God'. Moreover, in that prudish nation he is the free poet.

England has two books, one which she has made, the other which has made her,—Shakespeare and the Bible. These two books do not altogether agree; the Bible opposes Shakespeare.

Certainly, as a literary book, the Bible—that vast Oriental beaker, brimming with poetry even

more than Shakespeare—might harmonize with him; but from a social and religious point of view it abhors him. Shakespeare thinks, Shakespeare dreams, Shakespeare doubts. There is in him something of that Montaigne whom he loved. The 'To be, or not to be', comes from the 'What do I know?' of Montaigne.

Moreover, Shakespeare has the grievous habit of invention. Faith excommunicates imagination. In respect to fables, Faith is a bad neighbour, and licks none but her own cubs. One recollects Solon's staff raised against Thespis; one recollects Omar's firebrand waved over Alexandria. The situation is always the same. Modern fanaticism has inherited that staff and that firebrand. This is true in Spain, and is not false in England. I have heard an Anglican bishop, in discussing the *Iliad*, sum up all in this crushing assertion: 'It is not true'. Now, Shakespeare can be described, much more truly than Homer, as 'a liar'.

Two or three years ago the journals announced that a French writer had just sold a novel for four hundred thousand francs. This made a noise in England. A conformist paper exclaimed, 'How can a falsehood be sold at such a price?'

Besides, two words, all-powerful in England, range themselves against Shakespeare and block his way—'Improper!' 'Shocking!' Let it be noted that in a multitude of places the Bible also is 'improper', and Holy Writ is 'shocking'. The Bible, even in French, and through the rough lips of Calvin, does not hesitate to say, 'Tu as paillardé, Jérusalem'[1]. These crudities form a part of poetry as well as of anger, and the propehts, those angry poets, do not abstain from them. Coarse words are constantly on their lips. But England, which is continually reading the Bible, pretends not to notice this. Nothing equals the power of voluntary deafness in fanatics.

[1] Ezekiel xvi 28, and *passim*. TR.

Would you have another example of this deafness? Roman orthodoxy has not to this day admitted the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, although authenticated by the four Evangelists. It is in vain that Matthew says: 'Behold, his mother and his brethren stood without'. . . . 'And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas. And his sisters, are they not all with us?' In vain Mark insists: 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?' In vain Luke repeats: 'Then came to him his mother and his brethren'. In vain John adds: 'He, and his mother and his brethren'. . . . 'Neither did his brethren believe in him'. . . . 'But when his brethren were gone up',—Catholicism does not hear.

To make up for this deafness, Puritanism turns a sensitive ear toward Shakespeare,—of whom the Rev. John Wheeler says, he is 'like all poets, something of a Pagan'. Intolerance and inconsistency are sisters. Besides, in the matter of proscribing and damning, logic is superfluous. When Shakespeare, by the mouth of Othello, calls Desdemona 'whore', there is general indignation, unanimous revolt, universal scandal. Who is this Shakespeare? All the Biblical sects stop their ears, forgetting that Aaron applies exactly the same epithet to Sephora, wife of Moses. It is true that this occurs in an apocryphal work, 'The Life of Moses'; but the apocryphal works are quite as authentic as the canonical ones.

Hence the dogged coldness of England toward Shakespeare. Her attitude toward him is still that of Elizabeth—at least we fear so; we should be happy to be contradicted. We are more ambitious for the glory of England than England is herself. This cannot displease her.

England has a strange institution, 'the poet laureate', which attests the official, and perhaps the national admirations. Under Elizabeth, and during Shake-

speare's life, England's poet was named Drummond [1].

Past, indeed, are the days when the playbills read: 'Macbeth, Opera of Shakespeare, altered by Sir William Davenant'. But if *Macbeth* is played, it is before a small audience. Kean and Macready have failed in it.

At this hour they would not play Shakespeare on any English stage without erasing from the text the word 'God' wherever they find it. In the full tide of the nineteenth century, the Lord Chamberlain is still an incubus upon Shakespeare. In England, outside the church, the word 'God' is not made use of. In conversation they replace 'God' by 'Goodness'. In the editions or in the representations of Shakespeare, 'God' is replaced by 'Heaven'. What matters it that the sense is perverted, that the verse limps? 'Lord! Lord! Lord!' the last outcry of expiring Desdemona, was suppressed by official command in the edition of Blount and Jaggard in 1623. They do not utter it on the stage [2]. 'Sweet Jesus!' would be a blasphemy; a devout Spanish woman on the English stage is bound to exclaim 'Sweet Jupiter!' Do we exaggerate? Would you have a proof? Let us open *Measure for Measure*. There is a nun, Isabella. Whom does she invoke? Jupiter. Shakespeare wrote it 'Jesus' [3].

[1] This 'strange institution' seems not to have existed in Elizabeth's time; and it is difficult to understand in what sense Scottish Drummond of Hawthornden can be called 'England's poet' under Elizabeth, since he was but eighteen when Elizabeth died, and published his first volume of poetry ten years later. TR.

[2] The last words of Desdemona are

Commend me to my kinde Lord: oh farewell.

Her 'kinde Lord' is not, as a Frenchman might naturally think, her God, but her husband. TR.

[3] On the other hand, however, in spite of all the Lord Chamberlains, it is difficult to beat the French censorship. Religions are diverse, but bigotry is one, and is the same in all its specimens. What we are about to write is an extract

The tone of a certain Puritanical criticism toward Shakespeare is, most certainly, improved; yet the cure is not complete.

It is not many years since an English economist, a man of authority, making, in the midst of social questions, a literary excursion, affirmed, in a lofty digression, and without showing the slightest diffidence, this: 'Shakespeare cannot live because he has treated subjects for the most part foreign or ancient,—*Hamlet, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, Lear, Julius Cæsar, Coriolanus, Timon of Athens*, etc. Now, nothing is viable in literature except matters of immediate observation, and works relating to subjects of contemporary interest'. What say you to this theory? We should not mention it if it had not found approvers in England and propagators in

from the notes added to his translation by the new translator of Shakespeare:

'Jesus! Jesus!' This exclamation of Shallow was expunged in the edition of 1623, conformably to the statute which forbade the utterance of the name of the Divinity on the stage. It is worthy of remark that our modern theatre has had to undergo, under the scissors of the Bourbon censorship, the same stupid mutilations to which the censorship of the Stuarts condemned the theatre of Shakespeare. I read what follows in the first page of the manuscript of *Hernani*, which I have in my hands:

'Received at the Théâtre-Français, Oct. 8, 1829.

'The Stage-manager.

'ALBERTIN.'

And below, in red ink:

'On condition of expunging the name of "Jesus" wherever found, and conforming to the alterations marked at pages 27, 28, 29, 62, 74, and 76.

'The Secretary of State for the Department of the Interior,

'LA BOURDONNAYE.'

(Vol XI. Notes on *Richard II and Henry IV*, note 71, p. 462.)

We may add that in the scenery representing Saragossa (second act of *Hernani*) it was forbidden to introduce any belfry or any church,—a prohibition which made resemblance rather difficult, Sagarossa having had, in the sixteenth century, three hundred and nine churches, and six hundred and seventeen convents.

France. Besides Shakespeare, it simply excludes from literary 'life' Schiller, Corneille, Milton, Virgil, Euripides, Sophocles, Æschylus, and Homer. It is true that it surrounds with a halo of glory Aulus Gellius and Restif de la Bretonne. O critic, this Shakespeare is not *viable*—he is only immortal!

About the same time another—English also, but of the Scotch school, a Puritan of that discontented variety of which Knox is the head—declared poetry to be childishness; rejected beauty of style as an obstacle interposed between the thought and the reader; saw in Hamlet's soliloquy only 'a cold lyricism', and in Othello's adieu to camps and banners only 'a declamation'; likened the metaphors of poets to coloured prints in books, fit only to amuse babies; and showed a particular contempt for Shakespeare, as 'bedaubed from one end to the other with those bright pictures'.

Not longer ago than last January, a witty London paper was asking with indignant irony who is the more celebrated in England, Shakespeare, or 'Mr Calcraft, the hangman'. 'There are localities in this enlightened country where, if you utter the name of Shakespeare, they will answer you: "I don't know what this Shakespeare may be, about whom you make all this fuss, but I will back Hammer Lane of Birmingham to fight him for five pounds". But no mistake is made about Calcraft'[1].

CHAPTER IV

At all events, Shakespeare has not the monument that England owes to him.

France, let us admit, is not, in like cases, much prompter. Another glory, very different from Shakespeare, but not less grand, Joan of Arc, waits also, and has waited long, for a national monument—a monument worthy of her.

[1] *Daily Telegraph*, Jan. 13, 1864.

This land, which was once Gaul, and where the Velledas reigned, has, in a Catholic and historic sense, as patronesses two august figures, Mary and Joan. The one, holy, is the Virgin; the other, heroic, is the Maid. Louis XIII gave France to the one; the other gave back France to France. The monument of the second should not be less lofty than the monument of the first. Joan of Arc must have a trophy as grand as Notre Dame. When shall she have it?

England is insolvent toward Shakespeare, but France is bankrupt toward Joan of Arc.

These ingratitudes need to be sternly denounced. Doubtless the governing aristocracies, which blind the eyes of the masses, are, in the first instance, guilty. But on the whole, conscience exists for a people as for an individual; ignorance is only an extenuating circumstance; and when these denials of justice last for centuries, they remain the fault of governments, while becoming the fault of nations. Let us know, when necessary, how to tell nations of their shortcomings. France and England, you are both wrong!

To flatter a people would be worse than to flatter a king. The one is base, the other would be dastardly.

Let us go farther, and, since the thought presents itself, make a useful generalization from it, even should it take us for a moment from our subject. No, the people are not right in ascribing the blame indefinitely to the governments. The acceptance of oppression by the oppressed ends in complicity; cowardice is consent whenever the duration of a bad thing, which weighs upon a people, and which that people could prevent if it would, goes beyond the bounds of an honest man's patience; there is an appreciable solidarity and a partnership in shame between the government guilty of the evil and the people submitting to it. It is venerable to suffer; to submit is contemptible. Let us pass on.

It is a coincidence worthy of note that Voltaire, the denier of Shakespeare, is also the reviler of Joan

of Arc. What are we to think of Voltaire? Voltaire (we say it with mingled joy and grief) is the French mind—the French mind up to the Revolution, solely. Since the Revolution, the French mind has grown with the growth of France, and tends to become the European mind. It is less local and more fraternal, less Gallic and more human. It represents more and more Paris, the urban heart of the world. As for Voltaire, he remains what he is—the man of the future; but also the man of the past. He is one of those glories which make the thinker say *yes* and *no*: he has against him two sarcasms—Joan of Arc, and Shakespeare. He is punished through what he sneered at.

CHAPTER V

WHEREFORE, indeed, a monument to Shakespeare? The statue he has made for himself, with all England for a pedestal, is better. Shakespeare has no need of a pyramid; he has his work.

What do you suppose marble could do for him? What can bronze do, where there is glory? Malachite and alabaster are of no avail; jasper, serpentine, basalt, red porphyry like that at the Invalides, granite, marble of Paros and Carrara, are a waste of pains: genius is genius without them. What though every variety of stone had its place there, would that add a cubit to this man's stature? What arch shall be more indestructible than this—*The Winter's Tale, The Tempest, The Merry Wives of Windsor, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Julius Cæsar, Coriolanus?* What monument sublimer than *Lear*, sterner than *The Merchant of Venice*, more dazzling than *Romeo and Juliet*, more amazing than *Richard III?* What moon could shed about the pile a light more mystic than that of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream?* What capital, were it even London, could rumble around it as tumultuously as Macbeth's perturbed soul? What framework of cedar or of oak will last as long as

Othello? What bronze can equal the bronze of *Hamlet?* No construction of lime, of rock, of iron, and of cement, is worth the deep breath of genius, which is the respiration of God through man. A head containing an idea, such is the summit; no heaps of brick and stone can rival it. What edifice equals a thought? Babel is less lofty than Isaiah; Cheops is smaller than Homer; the Colosseum is inferior to Juvenal; the Giralda of Seville is dwarfish by the side of Cervantes; St. Peter's of Rome does not reach to the ankle of Dante. What architect has skill to build a tower as high as the name of Shakespeare?

Add anything, if you can, to a mind!

Imagine a monument. Suppose it splendid, suppose it sublime. A triumphal arch, an obelisk, a circus with a pedestal in the centre, a cathedral. No people is more illustrious, more noble, more splendid, more high-minded, than the English people. Wed these two ideas, England and Shakespeare, and let their issue be a monument. Such a nation celebrating such a man,—the spectacle would be superb. Imagine the monument, imagine the inauguration. The Peers are there, the Commons follow, the bishops officiate, the princes join the procession, the Queen is present. The virtuous woman, in whom the English people, royalist as we know, see and revere their living personification, this worthy mother, this noble widow, comes, with the deep respect which is befitting, to incline material majesty before ideal majesty,—the Queen of England salutes Shakespeare; the homage of Victoria repairs the disdain of Elizabeth. As for Elizabeth, she is probably there also, sculptured somewhere on the surbase, with Henry VIII her father, and James I her successor,—pigmies beneath the poet. Cannons boom, the curtain drops, the unveiled statue seems to say: 'At length!' It has grown in the darkness for three hundred years, three centuries, the youth of a colossus; how vast it is! To compose it, the bronze statues of York, of Cumber-

land, of Pitt, and of Peel, have been utilized; the public squares have been relieved of a heap of unjustifiable castings; all sorts of Henrys and Edwards have been blended in that lofty figure; for it the various Williams and the numerous Georges have been melted down; the Hyde Park Achilles forms its great toe: it is noble,—behold Shakespeare almost as great as a Pharoah or a Sesostris! Bells, drums, trumpets, applause, hurrahs.

What then?

To England this is honourable; to Shakespeare indifferent.

What is the salutation of royalty, of aristocracy, of the army, and even of the English populace—like almost all other nations, still ignorant—what is the acclamation of all these variously enlightened groups, to one who has the eternal and well-considered applause of all centuries and of all men? What oration of the Bishop of London or of the Archbishop of Canterbury is worth the cry of a woman before Desdemona, of a mother before Arthur, of a soul before Hamlet?

When, therefore, a universal voice demands of England a monument to Shakespeare, it is not for the sake of Shakespeare, it is for the sake of England.

There are cases in which the repayment of a debt is of greater import to the debtor than to the creditor.

A monument is an example. The lofty head of a great man is a light. Crowds, like the waves, require beacons above them. It is good that the passer-by should know that there are great men. People may not have time to read: they are forced to see. One passes that way, and stumbles against the pedestal; one is almost obliged to raise the head and to glance a little at the inscription. Men escape a book; they cannot escape the statue. One day on the bridge of Rouen, before the beautiful statue carved by David d'Angers, a peasant mounted on a donkey said to me, 'Do you know Pierre Corneille?' 'Yes', I replied. 'So do I', he rejoined. 'And

do you know *The Cid?*' I resumed. 'No', said he.

To him the statue was Corneille.

The people need such an introduction to their great men. The monument incites them to know more of the man. They desire to learn to read, in order to know what this bronze means. A statue is a nudge to ignorance.

The erection of such monuments is therefore not merely a matter of national justice, but of popular utility.

In the end, England will certainly yield to the temptation of performing an act at once useful and just. She is the debtor of Shakespeare. To leave such a debt in abeyance is an attitude hardly compatible with national pride. It is a point of morality that nations should pay their debts of gratitude. Enthusiasm is probity. When a man is a glory upon his nation's brow, the nation that fails to recognize the fact excites the amazement of the race.

CHAPTER VI

As it was easy to foresee, England will build a monument to her poet.

At the very moment when we finished writing the pages you have just read, announcement was made in London of the formation of a committee for the solemn celebration of the three-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Shakespeare. This committee will dedicate to Shakespeare, on the 23d of April, 1864, a monument and a festival, which will surpass, we doubt not, the incomplete programme we have just sketched out. They will spare nothing. The act of admiration will be a striking one. One may expect everything, in point of magnificence, from the nation which has created the prodigious palace at Sydenham, that Versailles of a people. The initiative taken by the committee will certainly receive support from the powers that be. We dis-

card, for our part, and the committee will discard, we think, all idea of a testimonial by subscription. A subscription, unless of one penny—that is to say, open to all the people—is necessarily fractional. What is due to Shakespeare is a national testimonial—a holiday, a public festival, a popular monument, voted by the Chambers and entered in the Budget. England would do it for her king. Now, what is the King of England beside the Man of England? All confidence is due to the Shakespeare Jubilee Committee,—a committee composed of persons highly distinguished in the Press, the peerage, literature, the theatre, and the Church. Eminent men from all countries, representing the intelligence of France, of Germany, of Belgium, of Spain, of Italy, complete this committee, which is from all points of view excellent and competent. Another committee, formed at Stratford-on-Avon, seconds the London committee. We congratulate England.

Nations are hard of hearing, but so long of life that their deafness is in no way irreparable. They have time to change their minds. The English are at last awakening to their glory. England begins to spell that name, Shakespeare, upon which the World has laid her finger.

In April, 1664, a hundred years after Shakespeare's birth, England was engaged in applauding Charles II, who had sold Dunkirk to France for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling, and in looking at something, that was a skeleton and had been Cromwell, whitening in the northeast wind and the rain on the gallows at Tyburn. In April, 1764, two hundred years after Shakespeare's birth, England was contemplating the aurora of George III, a king destined to imbecility, who, at that epoch, in secret councils, and in somewhat unconstitutional asides with the Tory chiefs and the German Landgraves, was sketching out that policy of resistance to progress which was to strive, first against liberty in America, then against demo-

cracy in France, and which, under the single ministry of the first Pitt, had in 1778 raised the debt of England to the sum of eighty millions sterling. In April, 1864, three hundred years after Shakespeare's birth, England raises a statue to Shakespeare. It is late—but it is well.

BOOK II

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I

THE nineteenth century holds tenure of itself only; it receives its impulse from no ancestor: it is the offspring of an idea. Doubtless Isaiah, Homer, Aristotle, Dante, Shakespeare, have been or could be great starting-points for important philosophical or poetical growths; but the nineteenth century has for its august mother the French Revolution. This redoubtable blood flows in its veins. It honours men of genius, and if need be salutes them when despised, proclaims them when ignored, avenges them when persecuted, re-enthrones them when dethroned: it venerates them, but it does not proceed from them. The nineteenth century has for family itself, and itself alone. It is the characteristic of its revolutionary nature to dispense with ancestors.

Itself a genius, it fraternizes with men of genius. As for its source, it is where theirs is,—beyond man. The mysterious gestations of progress succeed each other according to a providential law. The nineteenth century is a birth of civilization. It has a continent to bring into the world. France has borne this century, and this century bears Europe.

When civilization was cöexistent with Greece, it was at first circumscribed by the narrow limits of the Morea, or Mulberry Leaf; then, widening by degrees, it spread over the Roman group of nations. To-day it distinguishes the French group; that is to say, all Europe, with beginnings in America, in Africa, and in Asia.

The greatest of these beginnings is a democracy, the United States, whose first tender growth was fostered by France in the last century. France, sublime essayist in progress, founded a republic in America before making one in Europe. *Et vidit quod esset bonum.* After having lent to Washington an auxiliary, Lafayette, France, returning home, gave to Voltaire, dismayed within his tomb, that formidable successor, Danton. When the Past, that grisly monster, being brought to bay, was hurling all its thunderbolts, exhaling all its miasmas, belching black vapours, protruding horrible talons, Progress, forced to use the same weapons, suddenly put forth a hundred arms, a hundred heads, a hundred fiery tongues, a hundred bellowings. The good took the form of the hydra. And this is what is called the Revolution.

Nothing can be more august.

The Revolution ended one century and began another.

An agitation in the world of mind preparatory to an upheaval in the world of fact: such is the eighteenth century. The political revolution, once accomplished, seeks its expression, and the literary and social revolution takes place: such is the nineteenth century. It has been said with truth, although with hostile intent, that romanticism and socialism are the same fact. Hatred, wishing to injure, often affirms, and, so far as in it lies, consolidates.

A parenthesis. This word 'romanticism' has, like all war-cries, the advantage of sharply epitomizing a group of ideas; it is brief, which pleases in the contest: but it has, to our mind, through its militant signification, the inconvenience of appearing to limit to a warlike action the movement that it represents. Now this movement is intelligence, an act of civilization, an act of soul; and this is why the writer of these lines has never used the words 'romanticism' and 'romantic'. They will be found in none

of the pages of criticism that he has had occasion to write. If to-day he departs from his usual prudence in polemics, it is for the sake of greater rapidity, and with every reservation. The same observation may be made on the subject of the word 'socialism', which admits of so many different interpretations.

The triple movement—literary, philosophical, and social—of the nineteenth century, which is one single movement, is nothing but the current of the revolution in ideas. This current, after having swept away so many facts, flows on, broad and deep, through the minds of men.

The term 'literary '93', so often repeated in 1830 against the contemporaneous literature, was not so much an insult as it was meant to be. It was certainly as unjust to employ it to characterize the whole literary movement as it is wrong to employ it to describe the whole political revolution; there is in these two phenomena something besides '93. But this term, 'literary '93', was so far relatively exact that it indicated, confusedly but truthfully, the origin of the literary movement of our epoch, while endeavouring to dishonour that movement. Here again the clairvoyance of hatred was blind. Its daubings of mud upon the face of Truth are gilding, light, and glory.

The Revolution, that grand climacteric of humanity, is made up of several years. Each of these years expresses a period, represents an aspect, or realizes a phase of the phenomenon. Tragic '93 is one of these colossal years. Good news must sometimes be spoken through a brazen mouth; such a mouth is '93.

Listen to the tremendous proclamation issuing from it. Bow down, remain awestruck, and be touched. In the beginning God himself said, 'Fiat lux'; the second time, He had it said.

By whom?

By '93.

Hence it is that we men of the nineteenth century glory in the reproach, 'You are of '93'.

But we must not stop here. We are of '89 as well as of '93. The Revolution, the whole Revolution,—this is the source of the literature of the nineteenth century.

Then put this literature on trial, or seek its triumph; hate it or love it; according to the amount of your faith in the future, insult it or salute it: little does it care for your animosity and fury. It is a logical deduction from the great chaotic and primordial fact which our fathers witnessed, and which has given the world a new point of departure. He who is against that fact is against that literature. He who is for that fact is on its side. What the fact is worth the literature is worth. Reactionary writers are not at fault. Wherever there is revolution, patent or latent, the Catholic and Royalist scent is unerring. These ancient men of letters award to contemporary literature an honourable portion of diatribe; their aversion is convulsive. One of their journalists, who is, I believe, a bishop, pronounces the word 'poet' with the same accent as the word 'Septembrist'; another, less episcopal but equally angry, writes: 'I feel in all this literature Marat and Robespierre'. This latter writer is slightly in error; Danton, rather than Marat, is to be felt in this literature.

But the fact is true; this literature is full of democracy.

The Revolution forged the bugle; the nineteenth century sounds it.

Ah! this avowal suits us, and in truth we do not shrink from it; let us admit our glory, we are the Revolutionists. The thinkers of this time—poets, publicists, historians, orators, philosophers—trace their lineage, every one, to the French Revolution. From it they descend, and from it alone. '89 demolished the Bastile; '93 discrowned the Louvre. Deliverance sprang from '89; victory from '93. '89 and '93,—from that source issue the men of the nineteenth century. This is their father and their

mother. Seek for them no other lineage, no other inspiration, no other breath of life, no other origin. They are the democrats of thought, successors to the democrats of action. They are liberators. Freedom was the nurse that bent over their cradles; that ample breast suckled them all; they all have her milk in their bodies, her marrow in their bones, her granite in their will, her rebellion in their reason, her fire in their intelligence.

Even those among them (and there are some) who were by birth aristocrats, who came into the world strangers in old-time families, who received that fatal early training whose stupid endeavour it is to counteract progress, and who began their message to the century by some unmeaning stammering of royalism,—even these (they will not contradict me) felt within them, even from their infancy, the sublime monster. They felt the inward ferment of the vast reality. In the deeps of consciousness they felt an uprising of mysterious thoughts; their souls were shaken by the profound perturbation of false certitudes; little by little they perceived the sombre surface of their monarchism, Catholicism, and aristocracy, trembling, quaking, gaping open. One day the swelling of truth within them abruptly culminated, and suddenly the crust was rent, the eruption took place, and behold them opened, shivered by a light which fell not upon them from without, but—nobler miracle!—issued from these astonished men, and illuminated them while it set them aflame. All unawares, they had become volcanic craters.

They have been reproached with this phenomenon, as with treason. In fact, they passed over from right divine to human rights. They turned the back upon false history, false tradition, false dogmas, false philosophy, false daylight, false truth. That dawn-summoned bird, the free-soaring spirit, is offensive to minds saturated with ignorance and to embryons preserved in alcohol. He who sees, offends the blind;

he who hears, enrages the deaf; he who walks, insults the cripple in his wooden bowl. In the eyes of dwarfs, abortions, Aztecs, myrmidons, and pigmies forever stunted with the rickets, growth is apostasy.

The writers and poets of the nineteenth century have the admirable good fortune of proceeding from a genesis, of arriving after an end of the world, of accompanying a reappearance of light, of being the organs of a new beginning. This imposes on them duties unknown to their predecessors,—the duties of intentional reformers and direct civilizers. They continue nothing; they form everything anew. The new time brings new duties. The function of thinkers in our days is complex; it no longer suffices to think,—one must love; it no longer suffices to think and to love,—one must act. To think, to love, and to act, no longer suffice,—one must suffer. Lay down the pen, and go where you hear the grape-shot. Here is a barricade; take your place there. Here is exile; accept it. Here is the scaffold,—be it so. Let the Montesquieu be able, in case of need, to act the part of John Brown. The Lucretius of this travailing century should contain a Cato. Æschylus, who wrote *The Oresteia*, had a brother, Cynegirus, who grappled the enemy's ships; that was sufficient for Greece at the time of Salamis, but it no longer suffices for France after the Revolution. That Æschylus and Cynegirus are brothers, is but little; they must needs be the same man. Such are the present requirements of progress. Those who devote themselves to great and urgent causes can never be too great. To set ideas in motion, to heap up evidence, to scaffold up principles, such is the formidable endeavour. To heap Pelion on Ossa is the labour of infants beside that work of giants, the establishing of right upon truth. Afterward to scale that height, and to dethrone usurpations in the midst of thunders,—such is the task.

The future presses. To-morrow cannot wait. Humanity has not a minute to lose. Quick! quick!

let us hasten. The wretched have their feet on red-hot iron; they hunger, they thirst, they suffer. Alas! terrible emaciation of the poor human body. Parasitism laughs, the ivy grows green and thrives, the mistletoe flourishes, the solitary slug is happy. How frightful is the prosperity of the tapeworm! To destroy that which devours, in that is safety. Within your life death itself lives and thrives robustly. There is too much poverty, too much privation, too much immodesty, too much nakedness, too many houses of shame, too many convict prisons, too many tatters, too many defalcations, too many crimes, too much darkness; not enough schools; too many little innocents growing up for evil! The pallet of the poor girl is suddenly covered with silk and lace—and in that is the worst misery; by the side of misfortune there is vice, the one urging on the other. Such a society requires prompt succour. Let us seek out the best. Go, all of you, in this search! Where are the promised lands? Civilization must march forward; let us test theories, systems, ameliorations, inventions, reforms, until the shoe for that foot shall be found. The experiment costs nothing, or costs but little. To try is not to adopt. But before all, above all, let us be lavish of the light. All sanitary purification begins by opening the windows wide. Let us open wide all intellects; let us supply souls with air.

Quick, quick, O thinkers! Let the human race breathe. Shed abroad hope, sow the ideal, do good. One step after another, horizon after horizon, conquest after conquest; because you have given what you promised, do not hold yourself quit of obligation. To perform is to promise. To-day's dawn pledges the sun for to-morrow.

Let nothing be lost. Let not one force be isolated. Every one to work! the urgency is supreme. No more idle art. Poetry the worker of civilization,—what could be more admirable? The dreamer should be a pioneer; the strophe should mean something. The

beautiful should be at the service of honesty. I am the valet of my conscience; it rings for me: I come. 'Go', I go. What do you require of me, O Truth! sole monarch of this world? Let each one have within him an eagerness for well-doing. A book is sometimes looked forward to for succour. An idea is a balm, a word may be a dressing for wounds; poetry is a physician. Let no one delay. While you tarry, suffering man grows weaker. Let men throw off this dreamy laziness. Leave hashish to the Turks. Let men labour for the welfare of all; let them rush forward, and put themselves out of breath. Do not be sparing of your strides. Let nothing remain useless. No inertia. What do you call dead nature? Everything lives. The duty of all is to live. To walk, to run, to fly, to soar,—such is the universal law. What are you waiting for? Who stops you? Ah! there are times when one might wish to hear the stones cry out against the sluggishness of man.

Sometimes one wanders away into the woods. To whom does it not sometimes happen to be dejected? one sees so many sad things. The goal does not appear, the results are long in coming, a generation is behindhand, the work of the age languishes. What! so many sufferings yet? One would say there had been retrogression. There is everywhere increase of superstition, of cowardice, of deafness, of blindness, of imbecility. Brutishness is weighted down by penal laws. The wretched problem has been set, to augment comfort by neglecting right; to sacrifice the superior side of man to the inferior side; to yield up principle to appetite. Cæsar takes charge of the belly, I make over to him the brains: it is the old sale of the birthright for the mess of lentils. A little more, and this fatal counter-movement would set civilization upon the wrong road. The swine fattening for the knife would no longer be the king, but the people. . . . Alas! this ugly expedient does not even succeed; there is no diminution of wretchedness. For the last

ten years—for the last twenty years—the low-water mark of prostitution, of mendicity, of crime, has been constantly visible ; evil has not fallen a single degree. Of true education, of free education, there is none. Nevertheless, the child needs to be told that he is a man, and the father that he is a citizen. Where is the promise ? Where is the hope ? Oh ! poor, wretched humanity, one is tempted to shout for help in the forest, one is tempted to claim support and material assistance from vast and sombre Nature. Can this mysterious union of forces be indifferent to progress ? We supplicate, we call, we lift our hands toward the shadow. We listen, wondering if the rustlings will become voices. The duty of the springs and streams should be to babble forth the word 'Forward' ! and one would wish to hear the nightingale sing new Marseillaises.

But, after all, these seasons of halting have in them nothing but what is normal. Discouragement would be weakness. There are halts, rests, breathing-times in the march of nations, as there are winters in the progress of the seasons. The gigantic step, '89, is none the less a fact. To despair would be absurd, but to stimulate is necessary.

To stimulate, to press, to chide, to awaken, to suggest, to inspire—these are the functions which, fulfilled everywhere by writers, impress on the literature of this century so marked a stamp of power and originality. To remain faithful to all the laws of art, while combining them with the law of progress—such is the problem triumphantly solved by so many noble and lofty minds.

Thence the word 'Deliverance', shining aloft in the light as if it were written on the very brow of the Ideal.

The Revolution is France sublimated.

There came a day when France entered the furnace—the furnace breeds wings upon such warrior martyrs—and from these flames the giantess came forth an

archangel. Throughout the earth to-day the name of France is revolution; and henceforth this word 'revolution' will be the name of civilization, until it can be replaced by the word 'harmony.' Seek nowhere else, I repeat, the starting-point and the birthplace of the literature of the nineteenth century. Ay! every one of us, great and small, powerful and despised, illustrious and obscure, in all our works, good or bad, whatever they may be, poems, dramas, romances, history, philosophy, at the tribune of assemblies as before the crowds of the theatre or in solitary meditation; ay! everywhere and always; ay! to combat violence and imposture; ay! to restore those who are stoned and run down; ay! to draw logical conclusions and to march straight onward; ay! to console, to succour, to relieve, to encourage, to teach; ay! to dress wounds, in hope of curing them! ay! to transform charity into fraternity, alms into helpfulness, sloth into industry, idleness into usefulness, to make centralized power give place to the family, to convert iniquity to justice, the bourgeois into the citizen, the populace into the people, the rabble into the nation, nations into humanity, war into love, prejudice into free inquiry, frontiers into welded joints, barriers into thoroughfares, ruts into rails, vestry-rooms into temples, the instinct of evil into the desire of good, life into right, kings into men; ay! to deprive religions of hell, and societies of the prison-den; ay! to be brothers to the wretched, the serf, the fellah, the poor labourer, the disinherited, the victim, the betrayed, the conquered, the sold, the shackled, the sacrificed, the harlot, the convict, the ignorant, the savage, the slave, the negro, the condemned, the damned—ay! for all these things were thy sons, O Revolution!

Ay! men of genius; ay! poets, philosophers, historians; ay! giants of that great art of the early ages which is all the light of the past—O men eternal, the minds of this day salute you, but do not follow

you. Concerning you they hold this law: Admire everything, imitate nothing. Their function is no longer yours. They have to do with the manhood of the human race. The hour of man's majority has struck. We assist, under the full light of the ideal, at the majestic union of the Beautiful with the Useful. No present or possible genius can surpass you, ye ancient men of genius; to equal you is all the ambition allowed: but to equal you we must provide for the needs of our time, as ye supplied the wants of yours! Writers who are sons of the Revolution have a holy task. Their epic must sob, O Homer! their history must protest, O Herodotus! their satire must dethrone, O Juvenal! their 'thou shalt be king' must be said to the people, O Shakespeare! their Prometheus must smite down Jupiter, O Æschylus! their dunghill must be fruitful, O Job! their hell must be quenched, O Dante! thy Babylon crumbles, O Isaiah! theirs must be radiant with light They do what you have done, they contemplate creation directly, they observe humanity directly; they accept as lodestar no refracted ray, not even yours. Like you, they have for their sole starting-point, outside themselves the Universal Being, within themselves the soul; as the source of their work they have the one source whence flows Nature and whence flows Art, the Infinite. As the writer of these lines declared nearly forty years ago [1]: 'The poets and the writers of the nineteenth century have neither masters nor models.' No, in all that vast and sublime art of all nations, among all those grand creations of all epochs, they find neither masters nor models,—not even thee, O Æschylus! not even thee, O Dante! not even thee, O Shakespeare! And why have they neither masters nor models? It is because they have one model, Man, and because they have one master, God.

[1] Preface to *Cromwell*.

BOOK III

TRUE HISTORY—EVERY ONE PUT IN HIS PLACE

CHAPTER I

BEHOLD the rising of the new constellation!

It is now certain that what has hitherto been the light of the human race begins to pale its ineffectual fire, and that the ancient beacons are flickering out.

From the beginning of human tradition men of force alone have glittered in the empyrean of history; theirs was the sole supremacy. Under the various names of king, emperor, chief, captain, prince —epitomized in the word 'hero'—this apocalyptic group shone resplendent. Terror raised acclamations to salute them, dripping with the blood of victories. They were followed by a train of tumultuous flames; their dishevelled light gleamed portentous upon the children of men. If they lit the sky, it was with flames. They seemed to wish to extend their sway over the Infinite. Amid their glory was heard the crash of ruin. That red glare—was it the purple? was it blood? was it shame? Their light suggested the face of Cain. They hated one another. They exchanged flashing bolts. At times these vast stars crashed together amid volleys of lightning. Their look was furious. Their radiance stretched into sword-blades. All this hung terrible above us.

Such is the tragic glare that fills the past; to-day it is rapidly waning.

There is decline in war, decline in despotism, decline in theocracy, decline in slavery, decline in the scaffold.

The sword-blade grows shorter, the tiara is fading away, the crown is vulgarized, war is coming to seem but madness, the plume is abased, usurpation is circumscribed, shackles are growing lighter, the rack is out of joint. The antique violence of the few against all, called right divine, is nearing its end. Legitimate sovereignty by the grace of God, the Pharamond monarchy, nations branded on the shoulder with the fleur-de-lys, the possession of nations by the fact of birth, rights over the living acquired through a long line of dead ancestors,—these things still maintain the struggle for existence here and there, as at Naples, in Prussia, etc.; but it is a struggle, not a battle,—it is death straining after life. A stammering, which to-morrow will be speech, and the day after to-morrow a gospel, proceeds from the bruised lips of the serf, of the vassal, of the labouring-man, of the pariah. The gag is breaking between the teeth of the human race. The patient human race has had enough of the path of sorrow, and refuses to go farther.

Already certain kinds of despots are no longer possible. The Pharaoh is a mummy, the Sultan is a phantom, the Cæsar is a counterfeit. This stylite of the Trajan columns is anchylosed upon its pedestal: its head is covered with the excrement of the free eagles; it is nonentity rather than glory; this laurel garland is bound on with grave-clothes.

The period of the men of violence is past. They have been glorious, certainly, but with a glory that melts away. That species of great men is soluble in progress. Civilization rapidly oxidizes these bronzes. The French Revolution has already brought the universal conscience to such a degree of maturity that the hero can no longer be a hero without rendering account; the captain is discussed, the conqueror is inadmissible. A Louis XIV invading the Palatinate would, in our day, be regarded as a robber. Already in the last century these truths began to dawn. Frederick II in the presence of Voltaire felt and owned

himself something of a brigand. To be, materially, a great man, to be pompously violent, to reign by virtue of the sword-knot and the cockade, to forge a legal system upon the anvil of force, to hammer out justice and truth by dint of accomplished facts, to possess a genius for brutality—this is to be great, if you will, but it is a coarse way of being great. Glory advertised by drum-beats is met with a shrug of the shoulder. These sonorous heroes have, up to the present day, deafened human reason, which begins to be fatigued by this majestic uproar. Reason stops eyes and ears before those authorized butcheries called battles. The sublime cut-throats have had their day. Henceforth they can remain illustrious and august only in a certain relative oblivion. Humanity, grown older, asks to be relieved of them. The cannon's prey has begun to think, and, thinking twice, loses its admiration for being made a target.

A few figures, in passing, would do no harm.

Our subject includes all tragedy. The tragedy of the poets is not the only one; there is the tragedy of the politicians and the statesmen. Would you know how much the latter tragedy costs?

Heroes have an enemy named finance. For a long time the amount of money paid for that kind of glory was unknown. In order to disguise the total, there were convenient little fireplaces, like that in which Louis XIV burned the accounts of Versailles. That day the smoke of one thousand millions of francs issued from the royal stove-pipe. The nations did not so much as look. Nowadays the nations have one great virtue,—they are stingy. They know that prodigality is the mother of humiliation. They keep score, they understand double-entry book-keeping. Henceforth there is a debit and credit account with Warlike Glory, which is thus rendered impossible.

The greatest warrior of modern times is not Napoleon, it is Pitt. Napoleon waged war; Pitt created

war. It is Pitt who willed all the wars of the Revolution and of the empire. He is their fountain-head. Replace Pitt by Fox, and that outrageous battle of twenty-three years would be deprived of its motive-power; there would be no coalition. Pitt was the soul of the coalition; and, he dead, his soul still animated the universal war. Here is what Pitt cost England and the world; we add this bas-relief to his pedestal:

First, the expenditure of men. From 1791 to 1814, France, constrained and forced, wrestling alone against Europe confederated by England, expended in slaughter for military glory—and also, let us add, for the defence of her territory—five millions of men; that is, six hundred men per day. Europe, including France, expended sixteen millions six hundred thousand men; that is, two thousand men destroyed daily for a period of twenty-three years.

Secondly, the expenditure of money. Unfortunately, we have no authentic account, except the account of England. From 1791 to 1814, England, in order to get France crushed by Europe, incurred a debt of twenty milliards three hundred and sixteen millions four hundred and sixty thousand and fifty-three francs. Divide this sum by the number of men killed, at the rate of two thousand per day for twenty-three years, and you arrive at the result that each corpse stretched on the field of battle cost England alone fifty pounds sterling.

Add the figures for all Europe—numbers unknown, but enormous.

With these seventeen millions of men the European population of Australia might have been formed. With the eight hundred millions of English pounds sterling shot from the cannon's mouth, the face of the earth might have been changed, civilization planted everywhere, and ignorance and poverty suppressed throughout the world.

England pays eight hundred millions sterling for the two statues of Pitt and of Wellington.

It is fine to have heroes, but it is a costly luxury. Poets are less expensive.

CHAPTER II

The discharge of the warrior is signed. His splendour is fading in the distance. Nimrod the Great, Cyrus the Great, Sennacherib the Great, Sesostris the Great, Alexander the Great, Pyrrhus the Great, Hannibal the Great, Frederick the Great, Cæsar the Great, Timour the Great, Louis the Great, still other Greats,—all this greatness is passing away.

To think that we indiscriminately reject these men would be a mistake. Five or six of those just named have in our eyes a legitimate title to glory; they have even mingled some good with their havoc; a final estimate of them is embarrassing to the thinker of absolute equity, who is forced to weigh in almost equal scale the harmful and the useful.

Others have been nothing but harmful. These are numerous, innumerable even; for the masters of the world are legion.

The thinker is the weigher; clemency is his distinction. Let us then admit that those who have done only evil may plead one extenuating circumstance —imbecility.

They have still another excuse—the mental condition of the race at the time of their advent: the modifiable but obstructive realities of their environment.

Not men, but things, are tyrants. The true tyrants are the frontier, the beaten track, routine, the blindness of fanaticism, deafness and dumbness caused by diversity of language, dispute caused by diversity of weights and measures and coin, hate born of dispute, war born of hate. All these tyrants have a single name—Separation. Division, whence issues the Reign, is the despot in the abstract state.

Even the tyrants of flesh are mere things. Caligula

is much more a fact than a man, a result rather than a living being. The Roman proscriber, dictator, or cæsar, prohibits fire and water to the vanquished,—that is, deprives them of life. One day of Gelon represents twenty thousand proscripts; one day of Tiberius, thirty thousand; one day of Sulla, seventy thousand. Vitellius, being ill one evening, sees a house lighted up for a merry-making. 'Do they think me dead?' says Vitellius. It is Junius Vlesus supping with Tuscus Cæcina. The Emperor sends a cup of poison to these drinkers, that, by the fatal conclusion of too merry a night, they may feel that Vitellius still lives [1]. Otho and this Vitellius make friendly exchanges of assassins. Under the Cæsars, to die in one's bed is a marvel. Piso, to whom this happened, is remarked for this eccentricity. Balerius Asiaticus has a garden that pleases the Emperor; Statilius a face that displeases the Empress: treason! Valerius is strangled for having a garden, and Statilius for having a face. Basil II, Emperor of the East, captures fifteen thousand Bulgarians; he divides them into bands of a hundred each, and puts out the eyes of all save one in each band. This one leads his ninety-nine blind comrades home to Vulgaria. History characterizes Basil II as follows: 'He loved glory too much' (Delandine). Paul of Russia utters this axiom: 'No man possesses power except whom the Emperor addresses, and his power continues only so long as the word he hears.' Philip V of Spain, so ferociously calm at the auto-da fe, is stricken with fright at the thought of changing his shirt, and lies in bed six months at a time without washing and without trimming his nails, for fear of being poisoned by the scissors, or by the water is his basin, or by his shirt, or by his shoes. Ivan, grandfather of Paul, puts a woman to the rack before admitting her to his bed; hangs a bride and sets the bridegroom on

[1] 'Reddenham pro intempestiva licentia mœstam et funebrem noctem qua sentiat vivere Vitellium et imperare.'

guard to keep the rope from being cut; has the father executed by the son; invents a method of sawing men in two with a cord; burns Bariatinsky by a slow fire, and, deaf to his victim's shrieks, adjusts the firebrands with the end of his stick. Peter aspires to excel as an executioner; he practises the art of decapitation. At first he can cut off but a trifle of five heads a day; by strict application, however, he becomes expert enough to cut off twenty-five. What an accomplishment for a Czar, to be able to tear out a woman's breast with a stroke of the knout! What are all these monsters? Symptoms, angry pustules, pus issuing from an unhealthy body. They are hardly more responsible than the sum of a column is responsible for the figures. Basil, Ivan, Philip, Paul, and the rest, are the product of the vast environing stupidity. The Greek clergy having, for example, this maxim, 'Who could make us judges of those who are our masters?' it follows as a matter of course that a Czar, this same Ivan, should sew an archbishop in a bearskin and have him eaten by dogs. It is right that the Czar amuse himself. Under Nero, the man whose brother has been put to death goes to the temple to give thanks to the gods; under Ivan, an impaled boyard employs his death-agony of twenty-four hours in repeating: 'O Lord, protect the Czar!' The Princess Sanguzko comes weeping and upon her knees to present a petition to Nicholas; she begs mercy for her husband, she implores the master to spare Sanguzko—a Pole guilty of loving Poland—the terrible journey to Siberia. Nicholas mutely listens, takes the petition, and writes at the bottom the words, 'On foot.' Then Nicholas goes into the street, and the people throw themselves on the ground to kiss his boot. What can you say? Nicholas is, mad, his people imbruted. From the khan comes the knez, from the knez the tzar, from the tzar the czar,—a series of phenomena rather than a lineage of men. What is more logical than that after this Ivan

should come this Peter, after Peter, Nicholas, after Nicholas, Alexander? You all desire it more or less. The tortured consent to the rack. You have yourselves made 'this Czar, half putrefied, half frozen', as says Madame de Staël. To be a nation, to be a force, and to witness these things, is to approve them. To be present is to assent. He who assists at the crime assists the crime. The presence of the inert is an encouraging sign of abjection.

Let it be added that, even before the commission of the crime, some pre-existing corruption has given rise to the complicity; some foul fermentation of original baseness engenders the oppressor.

The wolf is the fact of the forest. He is the wild fruit of the defenceless solitude. Group and combine silence, darkness, ease of conquest, monstrous infatuation, abundance of prey, security in murder, the connivance of all present, weakness, want of weapons, abandonment, isolation,—from the point of intersection of all these things springs the ferocious beast. A gloomy region, where no cries for succour can be heard, produces the tiger. A tiger is blindness armed and hungry. Is it a creature? Hardly. The beast's claw is no more conscious than the thorn of the plant. The fatal condition of things brings forth the unconscious organism. In point of personality, and apart from the power of killing for a living, the tiger does not exist. If Muravieff thinks himself some one, he is mistaken.

Bad men spring from bad things; hence, let us correct the things.

And here we return to our starting-point: the extenuating circumstance of despotism is—idiocy.

We have just pleaded this extenuating circumstance.

The idiotic despots, a legion, are the mob of the purple; but beyond and above them, at the immeasurable distances separating that which shines from that which stagnates, are the despots of genius.

Among them are captains, conquerors, strong men of war, civilizers by force, ploughmen of the sword.

These we have just now recalled. The really great among them are Cyrus, Sesostris, Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Napoleon; and, with the restrictions mentioned, we admire them.

But we admire them on condition of their disappearance.

Make room for better, greater men!

Are these greater, these better men anything new? No. Their line is as ancient as the other,—more ancient, perhaps, for the thought must have preceded the deed, and the thinker goes before the fighter; but their place was taken,—taken by violence. This usurpation is about to cease; the thinker's hour has struck at last, his predominance becomes evident. Civilization, returning to its truer vision, recognizes him as its sole founder; the brightness of his line outshines the rest; the future, like the past, belongs to him; and his line it is that God will henceforward establish.

CHAPTER III

It is evident that history must be re-written. Up to the present time it has nearly always been written from the petty standpoint of fact; it is time to write it from the standpoint of principle. And this under penalty of becoming null and void.

Royal deeds, warlike uproar, coronations, the marriage, baptism, and mourning of princes, executions and festivals, the splendour of one crushing all, the insolence of regal birth, the prowess of sword and axe, great empires, heavy taxes, the tricks which chance plays chance, the world swayed by the haps of the first best head,—provided it be a crowned head; the destiny of a century changed by a lance thrust by a giddy fellow against the skull of an imbecile; Louis XIV's majestic *fistula in ano*; the grave

words of the dying Emperor Matthias to his physician, who was groping under his coverlet to feel his pulse for the last time: 'Erras, amice, hoc est membrum nostrum imperiale sacrocæsareum'; Cardinal Richelieu, in the disguise of a shepherd, performing a castanet dance before the Queen of France in the little villa of the Rue de Gaillon; Hildebrand completed by Cisneros; the little dogs of Henri III; the various Potemkins of Catherine II,—here Orloff, there Godoy, etc.; a great tragedy with a paltry intrigue,—such, down to our own day, was history, oscillating between throne and altar, giving one ear to Dangeau, the other to Dom• Calmet, sanctimonious rather than severe, not comprehending the real transitions from age to age, incapable of distinguishing the turning-points of civilization, exhibiting the human race as climbing up by ladders of stupid dates, learned in puerilites while ignorant of law, of justice, and of truth,—a history modelled rather upon Le Ragois than upon Tacitus.

So true is this that Tacitus has, in our time, been made the object of an official requisition.

We are not to be weary of repeating the fact that Tacitus is, like Juvenal, Suetonius and Lampridius, the object of special and well-earned hatred. The day when the professors of rhetoric in the colleges place Juvenal above Virgil, and Tacitus above Bossuet, will be the morrow of humanity's day of deliverance. Before this happens, all forms of oppression shall have disappeared,—from the slave-dealer to the Pharisee, from the cabin where the slave weeps, to the chapel where the eunuch sings. Cardinal du Perron, who received for Henri IV the strokes of the Pope's staff, was kind enough to say: 'I despise Tacitus.'

Down to the present time, history has been a courtier. The double identification of the king with the nation and with God, is the work of this courtly history. The Grace of God begets the Right Divine.

Louis XIV declares: 'I am the state.' Madame du Barry, a plagiarist of Louis XIV, gives to Louis XV the name of France; and the pompously haughty saying of the great Asiatic King of Versailles ends with the words: 'France, thy coffee is going to the devil!'

Bossuet wrote without winking, although palliating the facts here and there, the frightful legend of the crime-laden thrones of antiquity; and, applying to the surface of things his vague theocratic declamation, he satisfies himself with this formula: 'God holds in his hand the heart of kings.' Such is not the case, for two reasons,—God has no hand, and kings have no heart. But of course we are speaking of the kings of Assyria only.

This elder History is a good old dame to princes. When a Royal Highness says, 'History, do not look this way', she shuts her eyes. With the face of a harlot, she has imperturbably denied the dreadful skull-crushing helmet with its inner spike, intended by the Archduke of Austria for the Swiss magistrate Gundoldingen. This instrument is to-day hanging upon a nail in the town-hall of Lucerne, — any one can see it for himself; but History denies it still. Moréri calls the massacre of Saint Bartholomew 'a disturbance.' Chaudon, another biographer, thus characterizes the author of the witticism for Louis XV cited above: 'A lady of the court, Madame du Barry'. History accepts as an attack of apoplexy the mattress under which John II of England smothers the Duke of Gloucester at Calais [1]. Why, in his coffin at the Escurial, is the head of the Infante Don Carlos severed from the trunk? The father, Philip II, replies: 'Because, the Infante having died a natural death, the coffin when made was found too short, and the head had to be cut off.' History blandly accepts this coffin story. But that the father should have had

[1] So in the original. Richard II is probably meant. Tr.

his son beheaded—out upon it! Only demagogues would say such things.

The ingenuousness with which History glorifies the fact, whatever and however impious it be, appears nowhere better than in Cantemir and Karamsin—the one the Turkish, the other the Russian historian. The Ottoman fact and the Muscovite fact evince, when confronted and compared, the Tartar identity. Moscow is no less darkly Asiatic than Stamboul. Ivan bears sway over the one as Mustapha over the other. Between this Christianity and this Mahometanism the distinction is imperceptible. The pope is brother to the ulema, the boyard to the pasha, the knout to the cord, and the moujik to the mute. To the passers in the streets there is little to choose between Selim who transfixes them with arrows, and Basil who lets bears loose upon them. Cantemir, a man of the South, a former Moldavian hospodar and long a Turkish subject, feels, although he has passed over to the Russians, that in deifying despotism he does not displease the Czar Peter; and he prostrates his metaphors before the sultans. This grovelling is Oriental, and somewhat Occidental too. The sultans are divine, their scimitar is sacred, their dagger sublime, their exterminations magnanimous, their parricides good. They call themselves clement, as the Furies call themselves Eumenides. The blood they shed smokes with an odour of incense in Cantemir, and the prolonged assassination which constitutes their reign expands into an aureole. They massacre the people for the people's good. When some padisha, I forget which—Tiger IV or Tiger VI—strangles his nineteen young brothers one after another, as they run terrified about the room, the historian of Turkish birth declares that 'this was a wise execution of the law of the empire'. The Russian historian Karamsin is no less tender to the czar than Cantemir to the sultan. Nevertheless it must be admitted that, compared with Cantemir, Karamsin's fervour is lukewarm.

Thus Peter is glorified by Karamsin for killing his brother Alexis; but the tone is apologetic. This is not the pure and simple acceptance of Cantemir, who is more natural in the kneeling posture. The Russian historian only admires; the Turkish historian adores. In Karamsin there is no fire, no dash; his enthusiasm is sluggish, his deifications want unction, his good-will is congealed, his caresses are numb; his flattery is not first-rate. The climate evidently counts for something—Karamsin is a half-frozen Cantemir.

Such is the history dominant to this day; it passes from Bossuet to Karamsin by way of the Abbé Pluche. This history is based upon the principle of obedience. Obedience to whom? To Success. Heroes are well treated, but kings are preferred. To reign is to be successful every morning. To-morrow belongs to the king. He is solvent. It is foreseen that a hero may turn out ill; in that case he is only a usurper. Before this history, genius itself, were it the highest expression of force served by intelligence, is held to continual success: if it trips, ridicule; if it falls, insult. After Marengo, you are the hero of Europe, the man of Providence, anointed of the Lord; after Austerlitz, Napoleon the Great; after Waterloo, the Corsican ogre. It was an ogre that the Pope anointed.

Nevertheless, in consideration of the services rendered, impartial Father Loriquet dubs you marquis.

The man of our time who has best swept this astonishing scale, from the hero of Europe to the ogre of Corsica, is Fontanes, the man chosen during so many years to cultivate, develop, and direct the moral sense of youth.

This history keeps alive the notions of legitimacy, divine right, denial of universal suffrage; it regards the throne as a fief, and nations as entailed estates. The hangman figures in it largely,—Joseph de Maistre identifies him, delightfully enough, with the king. This kind of history is called in England 'loyal'.

The English aristocracy, which is subject to these happy inspirations, has bethought itself to give to a political opinion the name of a virtue, *Instrumentum regni*. In England, to be a royalist is to be loyal; a democrat is disloyal,—a variety of the dishonest man. This man believes in the people? For shame! He would like universal suffrage,—he is a Chartist; are you sure of his honesty? There goes a republican: beware of pickpockets! This method is ingenious. Society in general is cleverer than Voltaire: the English aristocracy is shrewder than Macchiavelli.

The king pays, the people do not pay: such is pretty much the whole secret of this species of history. It also has its sale of indulgences.

Honour and profit are divided: the master gets the honour, the historian the profit. Procopius is a prefect, and, what is more, Illustrious by decree, a fact which in no wise debars him from being a traitor; Bossuet is a bishop; Fleury is prelate-prior of Argenteuil; Karamsin is a senator; Cantemir is a prince. Best of all is to be paid successively by For and by Against, and, like Fontanes, to be made a senator for idolatry, and a peer of France for spitting upon the idol.

What is going on at the Louvre? at the Vatican? in the Seraglio? at Buen Retiro? at Windsor? at Schönbrunn? at Potsdam? at the Kremlin? at Oranienbaum? That is the question. The human race is interested in nothing outside of these half-score of houses, of which history is the door-keeper.

Nothing that relates to war, to the warrior, to the prince, to the throne, to the court, is trifling. He who lacks a talent for solemn puerility cannot be a historian. A question of etiquette, a hunt, a gala, a grand levee, a retinue, Maximilian's triumph, the number of carriages bearing ladies to the King's camp before Mans, the necessity of having vices in conformity with his Majesty's foibles, the clocks

of Charles V, the locks of Louis XVI; how Louis XV announced himself to be a good king by refusing a broth before his coronation; and how the Prince of Wales sits in the House of Lords not as Prince of Wales but as Duke of Cornwall; and how drunken Augustus made Prince Lubormirsky, Starost of Kasimiroff, under-cupbearer to the Crown; and how Charles of Spain gave the command of the army of Catalonia to Pimentel, because the Pimentels had been lords of Benavente since 1308; and how Frederick of Brandenburg granted a fief of forty thousand crowns to a huntsman who had enabled him to kill a fine stag; and how Louis Antoine, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order and Prince Palatine, died at Liège of disappointment at not having been able to get himself elected bishop; and how the Princess Borghese, dowager of Mirandola, and related to the Pope, married the Prince of Cellamare, son of the Duke of Giovenazzo; and how my Lord Seaton, a Montgomery, followed James II to France; and how the Emperor ordered the Duke of Mantua, a vassal of the Empire, to drive the Marquis Amorati from his court; and how there came to be always two Cardinals Barberini living, etc.—all that is important business. A snub-nose is made historic. Two little meadows adjacent to the ancient Mark and to the Duchy of Zell are memorable for having almost caused a war between England and Prussia. In fact, the skill of the governing and the apathy of the obeying classes have so arranged and confused affairs that all these regal nothings take their places in human destiny, and war and peace, the movement of armies and fleets, the recoil or the advance of civilization, depend upon Queen Anne's cup of tea or the Dey of Algiers' fly-flap.

History stands behind the royal seat, registering these fooleries.

Knowing so many things, it is quite natural that it should be ignorant of some. Should you be so

curious as to ask it the name of the English merchant who first, in 1612, entered China from the north; of the glass-workman who first, in 1663, established a manufactory of crystal glass; of the citizen who, under Charles VIII, carried in the States-General at Tours the fruitful principle of the elective magistracy—a principle subsequently adroitly suppressed; of the pilot who, in 1405, discovered the Canary Isles; of the Byzantine lute-maker who, in the eighth century, by the invention of the organ, gave to music its most sonorous voice; of the Campanian mason who originated the clock by placing the first sun-dial upon the temple of Quirinus at Rome; of the Roman toll-collector who, by the construction of the Appian Way in the year 312 B. C., invented the paving of towns; of the Egyptian carpenter who conceived the dovetail—one of the keys of architecture, found under the obelisk of Luxor; of the Chaldæan goat-herd who, by the observation of the signs of the zodiac, founded astronomy and gave a starting-point to Anaximenes; of the Corinthian calker who, nine years before the first Olympiad, calculated the force of the triple lever, conceived the trireme, and built a towboat two thousand six hundred years before the first steamboat; of the Macedonian ploughman who discovered the first gold-mine on Mount Pangæus—these names history cannot give you; these people are unknown to history.

Who are these? A ploughman, a calker, a goat-herd, a carpenter, a toll-gatherer, a mason, a lute-maker, a sailor, a burgher, and a merchant. The dignity of history must be preserved.

In Nuremberg, near the Aegidienplatz, in a room on the second floor of a house facing the church of St. Aegidius, there lies upon an iron tripod a wooden globe twenty inches in diameter, covered with a dingy vellum streaked with lines which were once red and yellow and green. Upon this globe is a sketch of the earth's divisions as they could be conceived in the fifteenth century. At the twenty-fourth degree of latitude,

under the sign of Cancer, there is vaguely indicated a kind of island called 'Antilia', which attracted, one day, the attention of two men. The one who had made the globe and drawn Antilia, showed this island to the other, laid his finger upon it, and said, 'There it is.' The man looking on was Christopher Columbus; the man who said, 'There it is', was Martin Behaim. Antilia was America. Of Fernando Cortez, who ravaged America, history speaks; but not of Martin Behaim, who guessed its existence.

If a man has 'cut to pieces' his fellow-men, if he has 'put them to the edge of the sword', if he has 'made them bite the dust', —horrible phrases, which have grown hideously familiar,—whatever this man's name may be, you will find it in history. Search there for the name of him who invented the compass,—you will not find it!

In 1747, in the full tide of the eighteenth century, under the very eyes of the philosophers, the battles of Raucoux and of Laffeld, the siege of the Sas van Ghent, and the taking of Bergen-op-Zoom, overshadow and hide the sublime discovery of electricity, which is to-day effecting the transformation of the world.

Voltaire himself at about that time is distractedly celebrating who knows what exploit of Trajan (read, Louis XV).

From this history is evolved a kind of public stupidity. This history is almost everywhere superposed upon education. If you doubt this, see, among others, the publications of Périsse Brothers,—designed, says a parenthesis, for primary schools.

It makes us laugh if a prince assumes the name of an animal. We ridicule the Emperor of China for having himself styled 'His Majesty the Dragon', and we ourselves complacently talk of 'Monseigneur the Dauphin.'

History is domestic; the historian is a mere master-of-ceremonies to the centuries. In the model court of Louis the Great there are four historians, as there are

four bedchamber violinists. Lulli leads the latter, Boileau the former.

In this old-fashioned history—the only style authorized down to 1789, and classic in the complete sense of the word—the best narrators, even the honest ones, of whom there are a few, even those who think themselves free, remain mechanically subordinate, make a patchwork of traditions, yield to the force of habit, receive the countersign in the antechamber, go with the crowd in accepting the stupid divinity of the coarse personages of the foreground,—kings, 'potentates', 'pontiffs', soldiers,—and, though devoutly believing themselves historians, end by wearing the livery of historiographers, and are lackeys without knowing it.

This history is taught, imposed, commanded, and recommended; all young minds are more or less imbued with it. The mark remains; their thought suffers from it, recovering only with difficulty; schoolboys are compelled to learn it by heart, and I, who am speaking, was, as a child, its victim.

This history contains everything except history,—displays of princes, of 'monarchs', and of captains. Of the people, the laws, the manners, very little; of letters, arts, sciences, philosophy, the trend of universal thought,—in one word, of man,—nothing. Civilization is made to date by reigns, not by progress. Some king forms a stage. The true relays, the relays of great men, are nowhere indicated. It is explained how Francis II succeeds Henri II, how Charles IX succeeds Francis II, and Henri III Charles IX; but no one teaches how Watt succeeds Papin, and how Fulton succeeds Watt. Behind the heavy upholstery of hereditary monarchy the mysterious dynasty of genius is scarcely glimpsed. The smoky torch upon the opaque façade of royal accessions hides the starry light streaming down upon the centuries from the creators of civilization. Not a single one of this series of historians points to the divine lineage of human miracles, that applied logic of Providence; not one

exhibits the manner in which progress gives birth to progress. It would be shameful not to know that Philip IV comes after Philip III, and Charles II after Philip IV; but that Descartes continues Bacon and that Kant continues Descartes, that Las Casas continues Columbus, that Washington continues Las Casas and that John Brown continues and rectifies Washington, that John Huss continues Pelagius, that Luther continues John Huss and that Voltaire continues Luther,—it is almost a scandal to be aware of these things.

CHAPTER IV

It is time to change all this. It is time that men of action should step back, and that men of thought should take the lead. The summit is the head. Where thought is, there power exists. It is time that the genius take precedence of the hero. It is time to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to the book the things that belong to the book. Such a poem, such a drama, such a novel, is doing more service than all the courts of Europe put together. It is time that history should proportion itself to reality, that it should give every influence its ascertained value, that it should cease to thrust regal masks upon epochs made in the image of poets and of philosophers. To whom belongs the eighteenth century,—to Louis XV, or to Voltaire? Compare Versailles and Ferney, and consider from which of the two sources civilization flows.

A century is a formula; an epoch is an expressed thought. One such thought expressed, Civilization passes to another. The centuries are the phrases of Civilization; what she says here she does not repeat there. But these mysterious phrases are linked together—; logic—the logos is within them, and their series constitutes progress. In all these phrases,

expressions of a single thought, the divine thought, we are slowly deciphering the word Fraternity.

All light is at some point condensed into a flame; likewise every epoch is condensed in a man. The man dead, the epoch is concluded. God turns over the leaf. Dante dead, a period is placed at the end of the thirteenth century; John Huss may come. Shakespeare dead, a period is placed at the end of the sixteenth century. After this poet, who contains and epitomizes all philosophy, may come the philosophers, Pascal, Descartes, Molière, Le Sage, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot, Beaumarchais. Voltaire dead, a period is placed at the end of the eighteenth century. The French Revolution, that winding-up of the first social form of Christianity, may come.

Each of these various periods, which we call epochs, has its dominant note. What is this dominant, a head wearing a crown, or a head bearing a thought? Is it an aristocracy, or an idea? Make your own answer. Consider where the power lies. Weigh Francis I against Gargantua; put the whole of chivalry into the balance with *Don Quixote*.

Each one to his own place, therefore. About face! And now consider the centuries as they are. In the first rank, mind; in the second, third, twentieth, soldiers and princes. Down with the warrior; the thinker retakes possession of the pedestal. Pull down Alexander, and set up Aristotle. Strange that to this day people should have read the Iliad in such a manner as to overshadow Homer by Achilles!

It is time, I repeat, to change all this. The initiative, indeed, is taken. Noble minds are already at work; the future history is approaching; some superb partial rehandlings exist as specimens; a general recasting is about to take place. *Ad usum populi.* Compulsory education requires true history; true history is begun, and will be made.

The old medals will be re-minted: that which was the reverse will become the face; that which

was the head will become the tail; Urban VIII will be the reverse of Galileo.

The true profile of humanity will reappear upon the various prints of civilization offered by the succession of the centuries.

The historical effigy will no longer be the man king, it will be the man people.

No one shall reproach us with failing to insist that real and veracious history, while pointing to the real sources of civilization, will not underestimate the appreciable utility of the sceptre-holders and sword-racks at certain moments and in presence of certain human conditions. Wrestling-matches require some equality between the two combatants; barbarity must sometimes be pitted against barbarism. There are cases of violent progress. Cæsar is good in Cimmeria, and Alexander in Asia. But to Alexander and to Cæsar the second rank suffices.

The veracious history, the true history, the definitive history, charged henceforward with the education of that royal child, the people, will reject all fiction, will be wanting in complaisance, will logically classify phenomena, will unravel hidden causes, will study, philosophically and scientifically, the successive disorders of humanity, and will take less account of great sabre-strokes than of great strokes of thought. The deeds of the light will form the van; Pythagoras will be a greater event than Sesostris. We said just now that heroes, crepuscular men, are relatively bright in the darkness; but what is a conqueror beside a sage? what is the invasion of kingdoms compared with the opening of the mind? The winners of minds overshadow the winners of provinces. The true conqueror is the man who does the thinking for others. In the coming history, the slave Æsop and the slave Plautus will take precedence of kings; such a vagabond will outweigh such a victor, such an actor will outweigh such an emperor. To make what we are saying obvious by examples, it is certainly

useful that a man of power should have marked the period of stagnation between the crumbling of the Latin world and the outgrowth of the Gothic world; it is useful that another man of power, following the first, the shrewd after the bold, should have outlined, in the form of a catholic empire, the future universal group of nations and the wholesome encroachments of Europe upon Africa, Asia, and America. But it is still more useful to have made the *Divina Commedia* and *Hamlet*; no wicked deed is mingled with these master-works; here the account of the civilizer bears no debit charge of nations crushed; and the enlargement of the human mind being taken as a result, Dante counts for more than Charlemagne, Shakespeare for more than Charles the Fifth.

In history, as it is to be made upon the pattern of absolute truth, that commonplace intelligence, that unconscious and vulgar being, the 'Non pluribus impar', the sultan-sun of Marly, becomes merely the almost mechanical fabricator of the shelter required by the thinker who wore the theatrical mask,—of the environment of ideas and of men requisite for the philosophy of Alceste. Louis XIV is bed-maker to Molière.

These reversals of rôle will exhibit characters in their true light; the new historical optics will map out the still chaotic sky of civilization; perspective, that geometrical justice, will take possession of the past, placing this in the foreground, that in the background; every man will resume his real stature; tiaras, crowns, and other head-dresses will serve simply to render dwarfs ridiculous; stupid prostrations will disappear. From such readjustments will stream forth the right.

That great judge, We All, having henceforth as a standard a clear conception of that which is absolute and of that which is relative, the deductions and restitutions will take place of themselves. The innate moral sense of man will find its bearings. It will no longer be forced to ask itself questions like

this: Why do people revere in Louis XV, and in the rest of the royalty, the act for which they are at the same moment burning Deschauffours in the Place de Grève? The authority of the king will no longer impose a false moral weight. The facts, well-balanced, will balance conscience well. A good light will arise, mild to the sons of men, serene, equitable. Henceforward there is to be no interposition of clouds between the truth and the brain of man. Definitive ascension of the good, the just, the beautiful, to the zenith of civilization.

Nothing can escape the law of simplification. By the sheer force of things, the material side of events and of men scales off and vanishes. There is no such thing as solidity of darkness. Whatever the mass or the block, every compound of ashes—and matter is nothing else—returns to ashes. The idea of the grain of dust is embodied in the very word 'granite'. Pulverization is inevitable. All those granites, oligarchy, aristocracy, theocracy, are the promised prey of the four winds. The ideal alone is indestructible.

Nothing is abiding but mind.

In this indefinite inundation of light called civilization, phenomena of levelling and of setting up are taking place. The imperious dawn penetrates everywhere, enters as master, and enforces obedience. The light is working; under the great eye of posterity, before the light of the nineteenth century, a simplification is going on, the fungus is collapsing, glory falls like the leaf, great names are divided up. Take Moses, for example. In Moses there are three glories,—the captain, the lawgiver, the poet. Of these three men contained in Moses, where is the captain to-day? In the dark, with the brigands and assassins. Where is the lawgiver? Buried under the rubbish of dead religions. Where is the poet? By the side of Æschylus.

The day has an irresistible corrosive power upon the things of night. Hence a new historic sky over

our heads. Hence a new philosophy of cause and effect. Hence a new aspect of facts.

Some minds, however, whose honest and austere solicitude is not displeasing, object: 'You have said that men of genius form a dynasty; we are as unwilling to submit to this dynasty as to any other'. This is to misunderstand, to be frightened by a word when the thought is reassuring. The very law which requires that mankind should have no owners, requires that it should have guides. To be enlightened is the reverse of being subjected. Between 'Homo sum' and 'I am the state' is the whole space between fraternity and tyranny. The march forward requires a directing hand; to rebel against the pilot scarcely advances the ship; one does not see what would be gained by throwing Columbus overboard. The word, 'This way', never humiliated the man who was seeking the road. At night, I accept the authority of the torches. Furthermore, there is little that is oppressive in the dynasty of genius, whose kingdom is Dante's exile, whose palace is Cervantes' donjon, whose budget is Isaiah's wallet, whose throne is Job's dunghill, whose sceptre is Homer's staff.

Let us resume.

CHAPTER V

MANKIND no longer owned, but guided: such is the new aspect of things.

Henceforward history is bound to reproduce this new aspect of things. It is a strange thing to alter the past; but that is what history is about to undertake. By lying? No; by telling the truth. History has been only a picture; it is about to become a mirror. This new reflection of the past will modify the future.

The former King of Westphalia, a man of wit, was one day examining an inkstand upon the table of some one we know. The writer at whose house

Jerome Bonaparte was at that moment, had brought back from a trip to the Alps, made in company with Charles Nodier some years before, a bit of steatitic serpentine, carved and hollowed into an inkstand, which he had purchased of a chamois-hunter of the Mer-de-Glace. Jerome Bonaparte was looking at this. 'What is it?' he asked. 'My inkstand', replied the writer. Then he added: 'It is steatite. Admire Nature, who makes this charming green stone out of a little dirt and oxide.' 'I admire much more the men,' responded Jerome Bonaparte, 'who make an ink-stand out of this stone.'

For a brother of Napoleon, this was not a bad reply; and he should be credited with it, for the inkstand is to destroy the sword.

The diminution of the men of war, of violence, of prey; the indefinite and superb expansion of the men of thought and of peace; the entrance of the real giants upon the scene of action: this is one of the greatest facts of our great era.

There is no more sublime and pathetic spectacle, —mankind's deliverance from above, the potentates put to flight by the dreamers, the prophet crushing the hero, the sweeping away of violence by thought, the heaven cleansed, a majestic expulsion!

Lift up your eyes, the supreme drama is enacting! The legions of light are in full pursuit of the hordes of flame.

The masters are going out, the liberators are coming in.

The hunters of men, the trailers of armies, Nimrod, Sennacherib, Cyrus, Rameses, Xerxes, Cambyses, Attila, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Alexander, Cæsar, Bonaparte,—all these vast, ferocious men are vanishing.

Slowly they flicker out; now they touch the horizon; mysteriously the darkness attracts them; they have kinship with the shades,—hence their fatal descent; their resemblance to the other phenomena of night draws them on to this dreadful union with blind

immensity—submersion of all light. Oblivion, that shadow of darkness, awaits them.

They are hurled down, but they remain formidable. Insult not what has been great. Hootings would be misbecoming at the burial of heroes; the thinker should remain grave in presence of this enshrouding. The old glory abdicates; the strong are lying down. Clemency to these vanquished conquerors! Peace to these fallen warriors! The shades of the grave interpose between their light and ours. Not without a kind of pious terror can one behold stars changing to spectres.

While smitten with the fatal wanness of approaching doom, the flamboyant pleiad of the men of violence descends the steep slope to the gulf of devouring time; lo! at the other extremity of space, where the last cloud has but now faded, in the deep sky of the future, azure for evermore, rises, resplendent, the sacred galaxy of the true stars, Orpheus, Hermes, Job, Homer, Æschylus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hippocrates, Phidias, Socrates, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes, Euclid, Pythagoras, Lucretius, Plautus, Juvenal, Tacitus, Saint Paul, John of Patmos, Tertullian, Pelagius, Dante, Gutenberg, Joan of Arc, Christopher Columbus, Luther, Michael Angelo, Copernicus, Galileo, Rabelais, Calderon, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Kepler, Milton, Molière, Newton, Descartes, Kant, Piranesi, Beccaria, Diderot, Voltaire, Beethoven, Fulton, Montgolfier, Washington; and the marvellous constellation, brighter from moment to moment, radiant as a tiara of celestial diamonds, shines in the clear horizon, and, as it rises, blends with the boundless dawn of Jesus Christ.

THE END

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